

Francisco Guglione, about Rafael, Jose, Luis, Angel Alberca - about all his friends from the glorious and bitter days of fighting in Spain, about people with whom he lay side by side in ambushes or laid mines under fascist trains. Nevsky admired: "What kind of people!" The Military Council of the Southern Front allowed former soldiers of the Spanish Republican Army to be enrolled in our battalions. Domingo's fighters gathered in the auditorium of the Institute of Chemical Technology, hearing about this, embraced, some wiped away tears, and Domingo, not knowing how to express his feelings, clapped and clapped me on the shoulder. Together with the Soviet sappers, the Spanish comrades were engaged in mining the most critical and complex objects until the last day of the defense of Kharkov. And I again bow low to them now, many years later - both to those who are alive and to those who died defending freedom and justice. In the twentieth of October, fighting was already going on in the outskirts of the city. The cozy mansions on Ivanova Street, on Basseynaya Street, on other streets, in other lanes, were empty. How to make the fascist authorities choose not these mansions as their residence, but a mined mansion on Dzerzhinsky Street? The military council approved the decision to imitate the mining of the best houses. Starting from October 19, a pickup truck with miners, which became familiar to the population, drove openly to the mansions during the day. Miners carefully took out boxes with "explosives", fiddled around inside the buildings for a long time, got out, and drove on. Within three days, Yastrebov, Leonov, Lyadov and other bombers drove around more than ten houses. On the morning of October 24, the secretary of the city party committee, V. M. Churaev, together with me and Yastrebov, drove up for the last time to house number 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street. The gates are closed, there is no one behind the fence. Schleger jumped over the fence and opened the gate. We entered the house, walked around the rooms, visited the boiler room. Great! The impression is that the inhabitants of the house have just left it in a hurry. From Dzerzhinsky Street we went to Rudnev Square. We stopped on a bridge prepared for destruction, Churaev got out of the car, stood by the iron fence, stroked the cold railings ... The Nazis broke into the city. Before their eyes, miners, including Spanish volunteers, mined the highway to Belgorod. On the main highway Kharkov - Chuguev, special groups of miners were waiting for the last troops to pass in order to

add real mines. The most difficult thing is to wait ... The evacuation of Kharkov and the withdrawal of the main forces were covered by troops under the command of the deputy front commander, Lieutenant General F. Ya. Kostenko. Under Kostenko, Major A. A. Vinsky remained the representative of the engineering management of the front. Just a few days ago, he made his way with a group of commanders and fighters from the encirclement and now energetically led the actions of engineer battalions and special groups assigned to mine the Kharkov-Chuguev highway, the approaches to Chuguev and the Chuguev airfield. Here, at the Chuguev airfield, we met in the second half of October 24. The front headquarters had already left the city, the last echelon was loading at the station, the streets seemed to be swept away, only utterly tired rifle units were slowly walking along the main one. After evaluating the situation, we unanimously decided to retreat with Vinsky to Valuiki. From the Valuiki station there is a direct railway line to Voronezh, to the headquarters of the Southwestern Front. They formed a column: one hundred and thirty people and twenty vehicles with a large supply of fuel, mine-explosive equipment, and food. We started. We had to overcome more than one hundred and twenty kilometers of soaked dirt roads, broken by transport. The column arrived in Valuiki only on the sixth day. None of their own was caught: General Nevsky went to Voronezh, to the headquarters of the Southwestern Front, Yastrebov went to Kuibyshev, where the apparatus of the Main Military Engineering Directorate was evacuated from Moscow. In one thing, we were lucky: we were immediately loaded onto a train departing for Voronezh, and in the early morning of November 1, standing at the door of the wagon, Vinsky and I were already watching how the outlines of the last warehouses and arrows of the Valuyki station were moving past us, dissolving in the damp twilight. My heart felt better: it was only three hundred kilometers to Voronezh, less than a day's drive ... We dragged along the road clogged with trains for exactly five days. And first of all, I asked General Nevsky a question about the Kharkov mines: is there any information, reports about their action. Georgy Georgievich did not have any information.

— Too early! he reassured. "But, since you are already here, start by asking the comrades who have arrived from the encirclement, contact the party organs. There may be information from the underground. I followed the advice, but got extremely

conflicting data. Who said that the Nazis easily neutralize our mines, who assured that the mines explode with just one attempt to remove them. And on November 10, the operational-engineering group had to drink a cup of bitterness: intelligence delivered a copy of order No. 98/41, issued by the command of one of the German units on November 8, 1941, to the headquarters of the Southwestern Front. The order reported that during the offensive of the "valiant troops of the Fuhrer" on Kharkov and in Kharkov itself, Russian engineering mines were found in large numbers, among them - delayed-action mines with clock locks and electrochemical fuses. The Russians, it was said in the order, tried to hide mines, burying them to a depth of two and a half meters and using wooden boxes for mine cases, which did not allow the use of mine detectors, which, however, were not required, because, they say, "inept installation of mines and inept their disguise allowed experienced Reich sappers to do without mine detectors. In addition - de, the Reich sappers were greatly assisted by prisoners of war and the population "freed from communist oppression." (It should be noted that both the Germans and ours preferred to use prisoners of war to neutralize booby traps. Approx. ed. A. E.). A copy of the said order was delivered to me with an accompanying note written in an unfamiliar but energetic handwriting: "These easily detectable and neutralized mines were installed under the direction of Colonel I. G. Starinov." I did not have time to give explanations to the Military Council of the front, I did not have time to point out the moments clearly indicating that the order of the fascist command was a fake, when new news came: German sappers removed a particularly difficult mine from the basement of house No. 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street and now the head of Nazi garrison General Georg von Braun.

- Well, what do you say? Nevsky asked when I read the typed text of the news. - Only one thing, comrade

general: the Nazis did not extract a radio mine, but a "baubles"! - Sure? - Absolutely

sure! Excuse

me, comrade general, but for myself and I trust my comrades more than the fascist bastards.

- Well, well, do not get excited! Don't get excited! Nevsky said, raising his hand. After this conversation with Georgy Georgievich, they did not demand any explanation from me. Apparently, the general talked with the commander and members of the Military Council, who were critical of the enemy writings, and knew the situation in the enemy rear better than the author of the accompanying note to the provocative order of the Nazis of November 8. But the nerves at that time of the commanders of the operational-engineering group, and I myself were tense: the vile enemy order accompanying it, the news of a mine in house number 17, cost more than one sleepless night. For two days I generally lived as if I myself were on an unrecoverable mine: but what if the Nazis actually managed, by some miracle or due to pure chance, to find and neutralize a radio mine? .. Turning on the radio mines On the morning of November 13, General Nevsky called. I prepared for a new blow, but this time the general was pleased: an order had been received from the Military Council to blow up the radio mines installed in Kharkov! Late at night, from November 13 to 14, 1941, General Nevsky, the head of the engineering department of the front, Major Chernov, and I, taking strictly classified ciphers, went to the Voronezh radio broadcasting station. They were waiting for us there. In addition to the military, civilians took part in the upcoming operation: the senior engineer of the Voronezh radio station, Arkady Vladimirovich Besspamyatov, and the head of the radio station, Fedor Semenovitch Korzhev. They were dedicated to the individual details of the operation. The design of the local radio transmitter was old, but before the war it was reconstructed, improved, and it had sufficient power. Having removed from the premises everyone who had nothing to do with the case, we sent the first signal to the radio mines at 03:15 on November 14. In the future, on different waves, in different ciphers, several more signals were given. The last one is at six o'clock in the morning. Control reception of signals carried out near Voronezh showed that they are strong. But was their capacity sufficient for Kharkov? Was the operation completed successfully? We didn't know this. The plane sent on November 14 for reconnaissance photographed the districts of Kharkov that were of interest to the Military Council. The pictures confirmed that at least some of the radio mines had detonated with great effect. Unfortunately, the area of Dzerzhinsky Street was not included in the lens of an aviation camera.

It turned out to be impossible to determine whether the radiomine exploded in house number 17. I am disappointed. - What a man you are! -

Nevsky reproached, - Yesterday, I suppose, they would have been glad if at least a couple of mines had exploded, but today ... Indeed, give a naked canvas, and he will say that he is fat! Perhaps the head of the engineering department of the front reasoned correctly. In any case, the radio mines blew up not only objects in Kharkov, but also the fascist slander against sappers delivered to Voronezh. A stone fell from my soul. Still, I really wanted to know if all the mines had worked, if the enemy had been seriously damaged. Alas, it was not possible to wait for new information from Kharkov. Only two years later ... However, about

this later.

Chapter 9

The operational-engineering group left Voronezh at dawn on November 15 forty-one. An early cold winter came, the dirt on the roads hardened, it was covered with dry snow, the drivers rejoiced. Sitting next to Schleger in the front seat of a ZIS abandoned by someone, and picked up by us, I, no, no, yes, and felt the left breast pocket of my tunic: there was a letter from the Military Council of the Southwestern Front addressed to I. V. Stalin. The letter contains a request to receive Colonel So-and-so on the issue of the mass production and use of delayed-action mines at the front and behind enemy lines. The mood was upbeat: finally, the burning issues of miners and partisans would be resolved! I wouldn't be happy if I knew that at that very hour the enemy, regardless of losses, was advancing on Moscow and that the fate of the capital was in mortal danger! .. We were moving by the shortest route, through Ryazan and Kolomna. Since November, the Operations and Training Center of the Western Front has been located in Ryazan, and, of course, it was impossible not to visit it. A little light, saying goodbye to the Spaniards, who remained temporarily in the operational training center, hurried to Moscow. On the outskirts,

... the factory chimneys did not swirl with smoke. As if trams had fallen through the ground. Shop windows are lined with sandbags, doors are hung with pood locks, trickles of drifting snow are chasing each other down the steps of office entrances, devoid of their main occupation - to cover up a string of human traces. On other streets there is not a soul, the windows in the houses are as bare: without curtains, without flower pots. Miners fell silent ... Without stopping anywhere, without putting themselves in order, they headed for Staraya Square, to the Central Committee of the Party. Handed over the letter of the Military Council of the front. They warned that the letter would be reported, and one should be

ready to appear in the Kremlin at the first call. "Write down our phone number," they advised. - If you are going to leave Moscow, be sure to let us know where and for how long. The efficiency of the conversation remov

with the capital: they are calm here, they know their business and work as always! I subsequently became convinced of the courage and firmness of workers' Moscow every day and at every step. The city has become very empty - that's right, the transport has become less - that's also true. But in the workshops of Moscow factories and workshops they still fired shells, repaired tanks and guns, made explosives, various mines, and welded anti-tank hedgehogs. And not only exceeded the norms, but invented, rationalized production! Just in those terrible, critical days, one of the Moscow workers found a way to combat the swelling of the wooden shells of mines in the damp earth, and this made it possible to keep thousands of anti-tank mines in combat readiness? .. In the department I find one Major Vakulovsky. The major hurriedly takes off his thick glasses, wipes them, his smile is bewildered. I want the keys to the safe. — It is open, Comrade Colonel

— How is it open? I pull on a massive steel door. Gives in easily. Inside is a gaping void. Neither my dissertation, nor instructions and manuals for saboteurs, nor lecture notes on the tactics and techniques of sabotage. Vakulovsky explains: in his absence, an order was received to take out the most valuable documents, and to destroy everything that has no value at the moment. I carefully closed the door of the empty safe. "No value"! Well, what can I say? Went to the table and sat down. He asked which of the generals and senior officers was in Moscow. It turns out that only Leonty Zakharovich Kotlyar, all the rest are in combat areas. A large operational-engineering group headed by General Galitsky and Colonel E. V. Leoshenya, head of the military engineering department of the M. V. Frunze Military Academy, was created, which creates barriers in the directions: Teryaeva Sloboda, Klin, Rogachevo, Dmitrov, Istra " Solnechnogorsk and Yakhroma, as well as a group of General V.F. Zotov, operating in the directions: Tula, Kashira, Voskresensk, Ryazhsk, Ryazan. Ten sapper armies are being formed. Three days ago, the construction of defensive lines in the city began. I raised my head: - In the very Vakulovsky did not answer immediately, as if he had to swallow a lump stuck in his throat:

"The situation is very difficult, Comrade Colonel. Minefields near Moscow..." Major General Kotlyar listened to the report on

Kharkov operation, lying on a bunk in a bomb shelter: he was knocked down by another renal colic. Details are not needed," Leonty Zakharovich stopped with a weak gesture of his hand.

- Are you familiar with the situation?

- Major Vakulovsky reported on the enemy's breakthrough on the Kalinin Front. - The

enemy launched an offensive in the Moscow-Tula direction ... Kotlyar was interrupted by a phone call. The general got up with difficulty, picked up the telephone placed near the bed. He spoke for a short time, obviously trying not to betray his state of health with his voice. He gave the necessary orders, hung up the receiver, carefully lowered himself on the pillow. Seeing how pale his face turned, what large drops of sweat covered the forehead of the head of the State Military Inspectorate, I noticed:

"We need a doctor, Leonty Zakharovich!" Kotlyar squinted his eyes, paused, waiting out the pain, quietly asked:

- Sharpen it, Ilya Grigorievich? Why is the doctor here? Do doctors understand anything about mines? He reached for a glass of strong tea; drank a few sips, took a breath, and continued in the same quiet voice:

— On the Moscow-Tula, the defense is also broken through. Guderian's tank divisions captured the Bolokhovo-Dedilovo area. Reinforcements were sent to Tula. We sent flying trains with anti-tank mines, but there are not enough miners in Tula. Urgently go there, Ilya Grigorievich! This is how I got involved in the construction of explosive barriers near Moscow and on the outskirts of it. Fulfilling the order of the head of the GVIU, after four hours he rushed to Tula. I was tormented by a painful premonition: trains with mines were waiting for themselves somewhere in a dead end. Our mines lie dead weight, instead of exploding under the tracks of fascist machines! - Go to the station! I ordered Schleger.

The station tracks were powdered with snow. Huge bomb craters gaped very close to the railroad tracks. And there are no flying trains. Driven away so as not to be bombed? But where? I found a military commandant: - Where are the "flyers" with mines? "Unloaded, Comrade Colonel. - When? By whom?

— Still in the morning. Our workers. Hour from hour is not easier! If inexperienced people start fiddling with explosives, fuses and

detonators - be trouble. Rushed to the car:

- In the regional committee, Volodya! Hurry! And only in the regional committee did I finally find out that I was in vain. On the instructions of the first secretary of the regional committee, Zhavoronkov, a group of inspectors from the OTC who ended up in Tula set to work without expecting anyone's help. Lieutenant Fyodor Andreevich Kuznetsov held classes with the command staff of two working battalions, other instructors took up with the soldiers of rifle units, and unloaded mines are already being installed in the Uzlovaya area ... The trip to Tula became, as it were, a prologue to our work with Major Vakulovsky in November and December of the forty-first year. Fulfilling the urgent orders of General Kotlyar, we, like weaving shuttles, scurried from the left flank to the right, from the right to the left, one to the Dmitrov highway, the other to Volokolamskoye, one near Solnechnogorsk, the other towards Dedovsk .; Let me remind the reader what intensity the events reached in the second half of November. Counting on defeating the Soviet troops in the Vyazma-Moscow and Bryansk-Moscow directions, bypassing Moscow from the north and south, and capturing it in the shortest possible time, the fascist command sought to achieve this goal by double encircling the capital. The first encirclement and defeat of the Soviet troops was planned to be carried out in the region of Bryansk and Vyazma. The second encirclement and capture of the capital - by a deep bypass of Moscow from the north-west through Klin and Kalinin, and from the south - through Tula and Kashira, in order to close the armored pincers in the Noginsk region. In carrying out this plan, the enemy did not spare either manpower or technical means, and put up with any losses. It was only on November 27 that Guderian's tanks were pushed back 10-15 kilometers towards Venev, in three days of bloody battles they crushed the enemy forces and forced him to abandon attempts to break through to Moscow from Tula and Kashira. In the north, the situation continued to worsen. On December 1, the Nazis unexpectedly broke through in the center of the Western Front, moved to Kubinka ... In those conditions, it was naturally not necessary to dig anti-tank ditches, scarps and counterscarps. Only mines could help out. And although some of the enterprises where they were previously made remained in the territory occupied by the Nazis, and some were on their way to the east, the mines were produced. They were made wherever possible. Work on mining the borders around the capital in the second

parts. This affected both the mining tactics and its quality. All tank dangerous directions were blocked. The operational engineering group of General Galitsky alone installed 52,000 anti-tank mines. In difficult to drive places, the highway was destroyed by powerful land mines. On important sections of highways and railways, in station buildings, in the buildings of rest houses and sanatoriums near Moscow, which the enemy could use to accommodate troops, in administrative buildings of abandoned cities, delayed-action mines were placed. People happened to work under bombardment, under artillery and mortar fire, to fight their way to retreating rifle units. The anti-tank mines laid down in the autumn required special care. Sudden severe frosts could disable them: moisture, getting into the fuses, freezes, fettering the compressed spring of the mechanism. I had to selectively check thousands of mines. Another problem is snow! From the twentieth of November, he brought down and brought down, nullifying the results of the autumn mining. Hidden under a thick white cover, mines frozen into the ground long ago become absolutely harmless to the enemy. There is only one way out - to start mining to the capital again, on fresh snow, on previously laid mines, "in two tiers." Mining is carried out hastily, in the immediate vicinity of the front line, sometimes in full view of the fascist tankers and infantrymen, under their fire. And when General Kotlyar, sending me and Vakulovsky to another dangerous area, demands to control how the "second tier" mines are fixed, you don't know what to answer: now no one fixes the places where individual mines are laid, not before! It is good if they indicate the location of the mine town on the map. It remains for us to act by personal example, but we cannot always draw up accurate maps of minefields, we limit ourselves to tying mines located on the edge to the terrain: there is no time for anything else. I often travel to Moscow to report on the progress of work and resolve emerging issues. Sometimes the night is in the city. I do not want to visit an empty apartment. I spend the night either in a hostel, next to the headquarters of the engineering troops[8], or in a booked room at the Moskva Hotel, whose main advantage is a bathroom. One day I find out: right there, in the hotel, Panteleimon Kondratievich Ponomarenko settled. Despite my fatigue, I hurry to him. Ponomarenko Big number

deserted. Looks uncomfortable. On the table near the door is a pile of newspapers and magazines. The hour is late, the windows are blindly curtained, a single light bulb shines. dimly, Ponomarenko is surprised

by the unexpected visit: - Where are you from? From what regions?

He lets me into the room, sits him down: 8 By order of the Headquarters of November 28, 1941, the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Red Army, the headquarters of the engineering troops in the fronts and armies were created and the positions of chiefs were established. engineer troops (fronts and armies. The author was appointed to the position of assistant chief of staff of the engineering troops of the Red

Army, while remaining head of the obstacles department of the headquarters of the engineering troops. - Well, tell me, tell me what is at the front? You can't sit still... The deliberate playfulness of Panteleimon Kondratievich cannot hide his concern. I understand everything: Belarus is occupied, and even here, behind the thick brick walls of the Moskva Hotel, you can hear the rumble of artillery... center in connection with the onset of winter, I give Ponomarenko a report on the work of the operational training center for four months. Ponomarenko delves into reading the report. Last night I did not sleep, now there are only five hours left for rest, I ask permission to leave. - Yes, yes, of course Rest!"

Ponomarenko nods. "Relax! I go down to my room, have supper, lie down, but sleep won't come: the meeting with Panteleimon Kondratievich stirred up all my previous thoughts about the partisans. Now, when the enemy has captured the vast territory of our country, but has not achieved victory, is forced to wage grueling battles, the exorbitantly extended communications of the fascists have truly become the Achilles' heel of the invading army. It's time to hit them with all your might! But the partisan detachments behind enemy lines act inconsistently, others do not even have contact with the party and military bodies, the supply of partisans from the Soviet rear is carried out sporadically, they lack weapons, explosives, mine-explosive equipment ... I stretch out my hand to the clock. The clock says two forty. No, disturbing Ponomarenko at such a time is unthinkable. Talk about the urgent needs of the partisans will have to be postponed. It's annoying, of course, but you can only blame yourself. It helps that the fatigue is too great: I still fall asleep. And in the morning a trip to the left flank of the 16th army

General Rokossovsky, in the second half of the day - near Serpukhov, and frustration with himself recedes, stalls, salutarily suppressed by momentary worries and duties. In my thoughts only tanks and mines. Mines and tanks. The enemy must not break through minefields! I don't even suspect how close the day of serious talk about the partisans is.

Chapter 10 In Stalin's waiting room

On one of the last days of November, the voice of Levitan, reading the summary of the Sovinformburo, sounds elevated: the troops of the Volkhov Front, having gone on the offensive, defeated the enemy, liberated the city of Tikhvin, and the troops of the Southern Front, waging a counteroffensive, liberated Rostov-on-Don! This news is like a ray of sunshine in leaden clouds. It seems that the words spoken by Stalin three weeks ago, on the day of the parade on Red Square, about the holiday, which will soon take place on our street, are beginning to come true! And then there's the excited Major Vakulovsky:

- A lot of fascist tanks were blown up near Akulovo and Golitsyn, Ilya Grigorievich! They say that the fascists were smashed to pieces, they lost ten thousand killed alone! Vakulovsky's joy is understandable: the major took part in the mining of the area where the enemy grouping that had broken through was destroyed. Yes, and I myself worked there, and I also feel satisfaction: the minefields do not fail. And how much more good news will we learn when we move forward?! There is no doubt that we will soon go on the offensive. The Nazis are attacking without the same pressure, they are exhausted, and reserves are constantly being pulled up to Moscow. Being at the rear lines, the employees of the GVIU observe the unloading and concentration of fresh Ural and Siberian divisions. The hour of reckoning for the Nazis will strike from day to day! .. Being near Serpukhov, I receive a telephone message from General Kotlyar, demanding to immediately arrive at the headquarters of the engineering troops. I leave everything, I'm going. - Your boss is waiting for you! - looking at me with

frank curiosity, says the duty officer at the headquarters. Kotlyar accepts immediately, interrupting the conversation with Galitsky and other comrades. I feel they look kinda weird. Did something happen? Kotlyar is short:

- You are summoned to the Kremlin, to Comrade Stalin. You must arrive at the appointment at twenty-two o'clock sharp. Have you misheard? Has it really happened?!

"It's sixteen o'clock," continues Kotlyar. - Go home, rest, put your uniform in order. Please visit me first. I'll be waiting at twenty o'clock. Time was melting like a speck of moisture in the sun, but at exactly twenty o'clock, shaved and ironed, I again entered Kotlyar's office.

- Well, here is a completely different view! said Leonty Zakharovich approvingly. - Sit down. The challenge, as I understand it, is connected with a letter from the Military Council of the

Southwestern Front? -

I think so too. - Remind me what questions are raised there, Ilya Grigorievich? — The need for the production of powerful anti-tank mines and delayed action mines is substantiated, it is written about targeting partisans to destroy enemy communications. Have you considered what and how you will speak? - Thoughts are not new, Comrade General! - All the better. State only the essence and as briefly as possible. - I understand! But there are a number of points that require clarification.

Perhaps Comrade Stalin does not know. Kotlyar interrupted quickly:

— Make no mistake, Ilya Grigoryevich! Comrade Stalin knows everything. Remember this. Remember, and in no case do not get excited when talking. Above all, beware of objecting! There may be circumstances completely unknown to you, but known to Comrade Stalin. Clear? In Kotlyar's tense gaze, in the intonations of his excited voice, one could discern concern, concern for his comrade.

— I will follow your advice, comrade general! - With I promised to thank you. I entered

... the first Kremlin entrance at 21:30.

- Documentation? Presented the documents. - Weapon? I didn't have a weapon with me. The same exact check in the second checkpoint. At 9:50 p.m., he approached the door to I. V. Stalin's waiting room. Pressing on the shiny copper handle of the massive door, he remembered what Stalin was like at the reception of graduates of the military academies in 1935; just dressed, smiling. What am I worried about?! In a cozy, quiet room, two comrades were already sitting, invited, apparently, before me. Collected, unsmiling, on each knee there is a folder with papers. Employees

The receptionist was asked to wait. He sank into a deep leather chair next to a burly man in a dark suit. He paid no attention to his neighbors. Glancing at the high double-leaf door to the office, now smoothing his sparse hair, carefully combed over a vast bald head, now he began to drum with thick fingers on a leather folder. I went over and over again in my mind the abstracts of the report made by General Nevsky and I to the Military Council of the Southwestern Front. Suddenly, something changed in the waiting room. No one uttered a word, no noise was heard, no one announced anything, but everyone straightened up, pulled themselves up, my neighbor pulled out a handkerchief, quickly wiped the drops of sweat on his shiny forehead. According to some signs known to them, the audience determined that Stalin had arrived. And indeed, after a few minutes, they began to call him. Half an hour later my neighbor was also called. After wiping his forehead again, he disappeared behind a high door... Some military and civilian comrades came in and out. The sound of footsteps was dampened by thick carpets. The chair was soft and comfortable. Warmth, penetrating into the depths of the body, relaxed. An hour has passed. Passed another. The anxiety left me. Enchanted by the warmth, the grave silence, I felt as if I was dissolving into them. Before he could catch himself, his eyes closed, everything was covered with a fog of drowsiness. Yes, and it was tricky not to doze off in such an environment after two sleepless nights and three hours of waiting.

- Comrade Colonel ... I jumped out of my chair, frightened and discouraged: did I really fall asleep? Maybe overslept?

"Comrade Stalin cannot receive you," he said in an even tone. the voice of the receptionist. "Comrade Mekhlis will receive you.

"But I need to see Comrade Stalin!" - not quite yet waking up, I objected. -

Let's go to Comrade Mekhlis. I stared at the tall white doors in dismay. Just a few steps to them, but I can not enter! Touched on the elbow; - Comrade Mekhlis is receiving in another office. The first thing that caught my eye in Mekhlis's office was a letter from the Military Council of the Southwestern Front lying on the table of the army commissar of the first rank. It was reassuring! "I am listening to

you," Mekhlis said sullenly after listening to the performance. I began to state the essence of the matter, but on the third or fourth sentence I was interrupted:

- Don't talk about that! This is not what is needed now! With a sharp movement, Mekhlis pushed the letter from the Military Council aside, got up, left the table and, pacing around the office, began to reproach me and the authors of the letter for irresponsibility: what kind of mines, and even delayed action, what kind of "surprises" can we talk about, if the army lacks conventional shells and nothing to

equip bombs with? - Deep enemy rear, communications! Mekhlis exclaimed with caustic irony. - Did you fall from the sky? Don't you know that the enemy stands

near Moscow itself?! - But we take into account ...

And again Mekhlis interrupted: - It is necessary to take into account that winter has come! That it is necessary to fully use the advantages that it gives! We need to freeze the Nazis! All forests, all houses, all buildings where the enemy can hide from the cold must be burned! Do you even understand this? I cautiously noticed that the forests did not burn in winter and that they were a base for partisans. And if you burn villages, our people will lose their homes. The objection only added fuel to the fire. Mekhlis called me and Nevsky unfortunate theorists, a blind man. I demanded to tell General Kotlyar that the Moscow region should be turned into a snowy desert: the enemy, no matter where he poked his head, should stu

ashes. "If

you once again dare to disturb Comrade Stalin with your stupid ideas, you will be shot!" You can go. General Kotlyar was waiting for me. He listened and shook his head.

- Y-yes, unexpectedly ... Very much! Don't be so upset, Ilya Grigorievich! In life, you know, you have to hope for the best. Maybe things will still change. Kotlyar consoled me, I was grateful to him, but the state of depression did not pass; everything went down the drain, everything! In addition, I remembered that the demand to set fire to the forests, expressed by Mekhlis, is the demand of Stalin himself! Exactly! He spoke about this in a speech on the radio on July 3, 1941! And I tried to explain to Mekhlis that the burning of forests is utter nonsense! What will happen now? To be honest, I was scared ... "Drive the German into the cold!" The defeat of the Nazis near Moscow began with the transition to the offensive on December 5 of the troops of the Kalinin Front. And on the morning of December 6, the Western Front and the troops of the right wing of the Southwestern Front launched a powerful counteroffensive. The great battle

forces to describe the combat operations of the advancing Soviet armies, I will tell here only about the hardships that befell the sappers. Before the start of the offensive, they had to remove thousands of their own, hastily placed mines, and then, during the fighting, neutralize enemy mines. In a number of cases, there was no documentation for their own minefields, deep snow covered the enemy minefields, they had to work under fire, the engineering troops suffered losses. Nevertheless, both the privates and the commanders of the mine-clearing battalions performed the tasks assigned to them with honor. I saw with my own eyes how lieutenants and junior lieutenants, yesterday's cadets of military schools, setting an example for the soldiers, crawled to where the sapper who had removed the mines had just died, how their subordinates moved after these boys ... , still traveled from sector to sector, from one army to another. The roads and fields looked the same: German trucks turned upside down with their blunt snouts into roadside ditches full of snow, burned-out, with open or torn-off doors, passenger Opels, Weasels, Hanses and Wanderers, tanks gaping with torn holes with crosses on the towers, and everywhere - corpses in gray-green greatcoats: sprawled on the snow, bogged down in snowdrifts, crooked, with heads wrapped in scarves and shawls over caps and caps, with forever glazed eyes. And - uneven, slowly wandering to our rear columns of prisoners, barely moving their legs with rags wrapped around them. We study the effectiveness of anti-tank mines on the battlefield. About fifty enemy tanks were indeed destroyed near Akulov and Golitsyn. Most of them had broken tracks, others fell into large craters from mines with an increased charge. Near Reshetnikov - sixteen fascist tanks with broken tracks. In other places, from three to ten tanks. The mines worked flawlessly. But the trouble is the same: as a rule, they only interrupted the undercarriage of enemy combat vehicles, and did not destroy them along with the crew. It can be seen that the "Daimlerbens" remaining on the battlefield have already been finished off by artillerymen. This means that mines of a new design are needed, which also have greater destructive power. The prisoners confirm that the mines were inflicted by the fascist

significant damage to the troops, but they argue that some of them, if the matter was not complicated by weather conditions, were neutralized quite easily. Well, this was to be expected: we still do not have enough mines that are safe for our own troops, but terrible for equipment and infantry enemy, practically inaccessible for mine clearing by enemy sappers. To thoughts about improving mines are added thoughts about partisans. The offensive continues, we drive and drive the fascists to the west, and some partisan detachments are uniting with the troops of the Red Army. The partisans rejoice indescribably, they say that they were able to intensify their attacks on the invaders in recent days, but they immediately complain about the lack of reliable, high-speed communications with their troops, the inability to transmit valuable intelligence data in a timely manner, the lack of ammunition and explosives ... In the tenth of December I get to Zavidovo, to his native station. Thanks to the rapid advance and withdrawal of our troops behind enemy lines, Zavidovo did not suffer too much, some of the houses survived, and the house where my childhood friend Yegor Derevyankin lived before the war also survived. A month before the attack of fascist Germany, in May, Yegor and his wife, Tatyana Nikolaevna, came to the capital. Tatyana Nikolaevna, a teacher by profession, was seven years younger than her husband, and although the Derevyankins had two children, she did not at all resemble the mother of the family. Slender, funny, she seemed very young, she knew this and teased Yegor, saying that he was an old man. Yegor liked it, he smiled happily. Is he alive, my comrade, with whom we wiped our pants for four years on the same school bench? Are his wife and kids alive? In front of the porch is the corpse of a German soldier flattened by a tank caterpillar. The windows were boarded up, plugged with rags, the steps were iced over, the door was not locked. Fumbled in the dark hallway for the second one, leading to the rooms. The rushing cold air shook the flame of the oil lamp, and a huge stooped shadow darted along the wall, wrapped in a woman's tattered shawl. - Tatyana Nikolaevna? .. It's me, Starinov! The woman is not

she stirred and suddenly got up, suddenly she swayed towards me:

- Ilya Grigorievich! Alive?! Our dear! Lord, where did it come from? .. Grabbing a short fur coat by the sleeve, she persuaded her to go, undress, sit down, not allowing her to go through or undress, as if she was not able to

lower my sleeve, afraid to part with something infinitely dear, with what my arrival reminded me of. She caught herself:

- You're from the road, from the cold, now I'm boiling

water ... - Where is Egor? - In the

army. There are no letters for the second month! - It's nothing,

Tatyana Nikolaevna, there are interruptions ... And the children? -

There they are. In the corner, on a large wooden bed, the Derevyankin children were sleeping under a pile of blankets. This means that the worst did not happen ... He glanced at the clogged

door to the next room. The mistress of the house intercepted her glance and explained: "There are families from burned houses. The damned Nazis sent arsonists who pretended to be partisans. Seven houses were burned, and the people did not allow more. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that the houses were indeed set on fire

by partisans who were following Stalin's order "Drive the German into the cold!". I immediately remembered the Finnish war. The Finns evacuated 99% of the population when they left. We come to the village - there is no population. Some of the houses have been brought into disrepair, some of the surviving buildings have been mined with delayed-action mines. Chilled and exhausted soldiers crowded into such houses for 50-150 people.

When houses were broken into, few were left alive. After that, we already tried to stay away from any buildings and structures, although there were few mined among them. And the whole army froze in tents. Yes, the Finns managed to drive us out into the cold. And now, when we decided to use their experience, what happened? They began to set fire to the villages in which the pe

"Look what the Bolsheviks are doing. You are being set on fire! Help us protect your villages! And the local population supported the Germans.

This made it possible for the enemy to recruit a large number of police officers. At the same time, the partisans of the Leningrad region, there were approximately 18,000 people, having learned about the call "Drive the German into the cold!", They decided that this was a provocation.

Many of them made their way through the front lines to find out what was going on. The rest were quickly defeated by the punishers, supported by the police and ... the local population. The iron stove blazed. I untied the duffel bag, laid out canned food, bread, sugar, lard.

"It's only my second day at home," trying not to look at such wealth and as if apologizing that she can offer nothing but hot water, said Tatyana Nikolaevna, sitting down on a bench nearby. - As the monsters approached, I picked up the guys - and to the village, to my friends. From here eighteen versts, the Nazis did not meddle there. And when she returned - do you believe, Ilya Grigorievich? - I did not dare to cross the threshold, so these "cultured people" dirtied the room. Now washed and cleaned. And they, bastards, lived like that! - It turns out that you did not see the fascists alive? - How did you not see it? When they were driven, they also fled through the villages, in a roundabout way!

Scarecrows stuffed. It's even a shame that such stuffed animals have reached Moscow. Oh, but they're cowardly! They are afraid of armies, they are afraid of partisans, and everyone who wanders into a hut to warm themselves is assured that they are workers, the working class! - Familiar song. - I take it and blurt out to one: they say, if you are a worker, do not

fascist, and if you don't want to fight, surrender. - It was risky! What a soldier! - And what to take

from him? You can't, he says, give up. Your Stalin said that all the Germans must be destroyed, your prisoners are being killed. I keep saying: "This is a lie. We do not touch the prisoners! Russians are not murderers!" Only he shakes his stupid head: "Nisht, nisht! Rus pu-poo! .." The Kremlin. Chairman of the State Planning Commission Voznesensky I left Zavidovo rejoicing that the family of my childhood friend had survived, that I had somehow helped his children, leaving Tatyana Nikolaevna my extra ration and thinking over what I had heard. The conversation with the wife of a friend was not forgotten, it was the last push that made me start another report addressed to Stalin, once again talking about the problems of partisan actions and the effectiveness of mining on enemy communications. The new report substantiated the need for the production of certain types of engineering mines, pointed out the unused possibilities of partisan struggle, and raised the question of creating a single body to direct the fighting of partisans. The report was written in fits and starts, in rare free moments. Maybe something is missing in it? It would be good to consult with one of the leading military or party comrades. And immediately I remember Ponomarenko. Of course you have to go to

him! He supported the idea of creating partisan schools, he is concerned about the needs of the partisans, he will not remain indifferent! In the first free hour I go to the Moscow Hotel. Valuing time, literally from the doorstep I announce to Panteleimon Kondratievich why I have come, I hold out the memorandum:

- Please read! If there are no objections on the merits, then maybe you can deliver it to the destination? He reads the report, squinting, then neatly folds the sheets: "About the mines, about the shots - good." But too little has been said about

the leadership of the partisans. This question, by the way, is not easy. I think about it all the time. - Then, maybe, instead of my memorandum, prepare another document? You know better, Panteleimon

Kondratievich. - I do not know. Ponomarenko goes to the high window,

which snow thickly flickers.

- Let's do it; you leave your report, I figure out what can and should be done, and you, on your next visit, immediately come to me. I'm leaving for Moscow in two days. Ponomarenko during this time worked on the issues of partisan struggle a lot. He has already prepared a draft letter addressed to I. V. Stalin. The letter refers to the need to strengthen the party leadership of the partisans, raises the question of creating bodies to lead the partisan movement and, with reference to the opinion of Colonel Starinov, makes proposals for the production of engineering mines and the training of qualified personnel. "I came to the conclusion that it is really better to present all these ideas in one document so that they are considered as a whole," Ponomarenko explains, noticing that I am finishing the draft of his letter. - If you do not mind, in this form I will give the letter to Andrei Andreevich

Andreev [A.A. Andreev is a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks]. I believe that in this case it will go straight to Comrade Stalin. I am leaving for the front with a sense of accomplishment, confident that in two months, no later, some decisions will certainly be made. But after a week and a half I was called to the org. the instructor department of the Central Committee of the party, where, it turns out, work is already in full swing on drawing up staffing tables for the headquarters of the leadership of the partisan movement, states are being determined

partisan schools and brigades, applications for weapons and equipment for partisan detachments are being prepared. Ponomarenko's letter reached the addressee in a matter of days, and the decision on it was made just as quickly! Stalin received Ponomarenko and had a two-hour conversation with him, about which the latter writes in his book "**People's Struggle**" (**Ponomarenko P.K. All-People's Struggle in the Rear of the Nazi Invaders. 1941-1944. M., 1986. S. 72-76. 248**). And a few days later, Major General Kotlyar and I were invited to the chairman of the State Planning Commission, N. A. Voznesensky, offering to take with them samples of some contactors and fuses. Kremlin again. In the reception room of Voznesensky, besides us, there are representatives of the Main Artillery Directorate, the Main Communications Directorate and industrial workers. We wait not long, about ten minutes. Voznesensky meets, standing at the table. He smiles, which is also unusual, and looks very young, in any case, younger than most of those invited. He offers to sit down, he himself sits down on a chair last, looks around the audience with a lively, benevolent look: - Recently, the State Planning

Commission received a letter from the Military Council of the South Western Front. It raises the question of providing troops and partisans with a significant number of various engineering mines and modern means of communication. This issue must be resolved, comrades! There is a revival in the office. Kotlyar touches my shoulder with his shoulder. I am in seventh heaven: it was not in vain that we worked with General Nevsky! Discussion begins on the needs of troops and partisans in mines and radios. Business specific. Major General Kotlyar and I are demonstrating samples of delayed-action fuses, elements of anti-removal of mines, vibration and inertial contactors for anti-vehicle mines, created by December. Voznesensky carefully examines them, wondering if it is possible to replace brass parts with plastic or aluminum ones.

"The state's opportunities are somewhat different than before the war, comrades, we must remember that there is a shortage of non-ferrous metal, and metal-cutting machines are extremely loaded ... Submit an application with tactical and technical requirements to Kotlyar," the chairman of the State Planning Committee addresses Kotlyar. - And let the engineers think again how to make the mines as safe as possible for their own troops. Receive instructions and other participants.

“I hope that with your help, industry will provide the army and partisans with the required number of good mines in a short time!” - Voznesensky says goodbye to us. - I wish you success! The wish of the chairman of the State Planning Commission is coming true quickly. By the spring of 1942, the problem of mass production of delayed action mines and the production of other complex mines was completely solved. Soon the troops and partisans begin to receive them. Finally!

Chapter 11 Mine "at night!"

There was no need to stay in Moscow: on December 14, Major General Kotlyar ordered the formation of a new operational-engineering group to set up explosive barriers on the outskirts of the recently liberated Rostov-on-Don and urgently depart for the Southern Front. The group included instructors and laboratory assistants from the operational training center of the Western Front, ten lieutenants with combat experience and short-term courses at the Military Engineering Academy named after V. V. Kuibyshev, as well as former soldiers of the Spanish Republican Army led by Domingo Ungria. I appointed Major V. V. Artemiev as my deputy, and Captain A. I. Chekhonin as chief of staff. On the evening of December 16, a train with a soft car provided to the group slowly departed from the darkened platform of the Kursk railway station ... I go to the young lieutenants. Girls - instructors Maria Belova and Olga Kretova are invited to tea. Croutons were made from black bread. Crackers remind me of home, of a family that I haven't seen for half a year... Steppes, snow, the clatter of wheels, the smell of locomotive smoke. Returning to my room, I lie down, trying to remember what Rostov looks like in winter. Thoughts quickly change direction, focus on the task received. I know that so-called "bypasses" are being created around Rostov-on-Don. These are anti-tank ditches located along three giant arcs to the north of the city, battalion defense areas with pillboxes and bunkers, and separate trenches. The eastern end of each arc rests on the Don, the western end - on the Don delta. It is these contours that our group will have to mine. My heart is restless. Since in Rostov they still rely on anti-tank ditches, it means that the required number of mines, and possibly explosives, are not in the 56th Army defending Rostov, Lieutenant General F. N. Remezov. And on December 5, General Kotlyar signed a directive on the possible replacement of anti-tank ditches with others, more effective and less

noticeable anti-tank obstacles! It will be necessary, apparently, to establish the production of mines. However, the lack of mines is not the main thing. I am sure that the group will receive mines. It is worrying how the head of the engineering troops of the 56th Army, Major E. M. Zhurin and Remezov himself, will react to our innovative plans for mining. My deputy major Artemiev says that Zhurin was his boss at the military engineering academy, he is a sincere, simple and well-versed person. I hope that in Zhurin I will find a like-minded person. But how will the army commander look at the innovations? I don't know his views on mine blasting. But we want, in addition to "hidden" and "fixed mining", to apply on the largest scale also "explicit mining"! Let me explain what's going on here. With "hidden", that is, with conventional mining on the ground, the mines are laid in the ground and reliably camouflaged so that they cannot be detected by observation. "Mobile mining" is a quick installation of mines in a hidden way in the area where the enemy managed to push our troops or make a tank hole in our defenses. For such mining in tank-prone areas, mine depots are prepared in advance and groups of fighters with vehicles are created in order to get to the desired battlefield in a timely manner. "Explicit mining" is a completely different article. In this case, thousands of mines are set in plain sight, in tens of thousands of bumps, which are easy to notice even from a distance and fix during aerial photography. The secret is that not all bumps are charged, and neither the human eye nor the camera lens are capable of determining which mine is hiding in. The enemy is faced with a choice: to go with tanks to the bumps and undermine or bypass the mined areas, to engage in battle in unfavorable areas. It is extremely difficult to clear bumps: mines can be installed in a hundred different options, where you can load the fifth, where the tenth, where the twentieth bump, where in the first row, where in the third, where in the fortieth, but you have to check everything! It is laborious, life-threatening (you can run into a booby trap), and most importantly, it forces enemy tanks to wait for the results of mine clearance under the fire of our artillery and under bombardment., suffer losses. Of course, the enemy can bombard the area with bumps. But the enemy, in any case, shells the area where our troops are defending, partially

destroying those mines that were placed in a "hidden" way. And to shoot all the bumps - there will not be enough shells or mines. In addition, German tanks with low ground clearance often ran into bumps not only with their tracks, but also with their bottoms. Their crews died in such cases. I hope to meet understanding in another way. The defense line of the 56th Army, which runs mainly along the Mius River, on the left flank rests on the Taganrog Bay. The northern shore of the bay is occupied by the enemy. There is no doubt that the Nazis did not create a continuous line of defense on the northern coast from Berdyansk to Taganrog, they keep small garrisons in separate settlements to avert their eyes, relying on our weakness and on more than thirty kilometers of frozen, hummocky bay separating our and enemy troops.

Consequently, the bay is an ideal place for throwing groups of mines into the enemy rear. ditch. Explosions on the roads of the enemy, the destruction of his small garrisons will not only force the fascists to stop all traffic, but will also force them to draw up significant forces for the defense of the northern coast, removing troops from other sectors of the front. That would be great! It is necessary to think carefully about the idea of throwing miners to the rear through the ice of the Taganrog Bay, weigh all the pros and cons, put the proposals in writing and present them to the command, and then how it will turn out. The Military Council of the Army will decide. On the outskirts of Rostov We arrived in Rostov in the early frosty morning of December 19th. From the windows of the carriage, the city, shrouded in misty haze, was indistinguishable. Seeing the dilapidated station building from the platform, we prepared to meet the ruins. But the city looked almost unaffected! This was explained simply: the Nazis were in charge in Rostov for only eight days, and they were kicked out with a lightning strike. However, even in eight days, the Nazis managed to blow up something, and most importantly, they shot and hanged hundreds of Rostovites ... At the headquarters of the 56th Army, we first of all sought out the head of the engineering troops, Major Zhurin. Yevgeny Mikhailovich Zhurin, tall, strong, with large features, gave the impression of a thoughtful, unhurried man. He spoke slowly, as if weighing every word he uttered. We talked for a long time, in detail, exchanged views on various types of barriers and established that we think alike.

- Can your group help military sappers in mastering mine blasting equipment? Zhurin asked hopefully. - Without any doubt! - Will you help with mines? - It's a

common cause, Yevgeny Mikhailovich, we'll do it together. We went to Lieutenant General Remezov. Zhurin introduced me. How long will it take you to make a plan

explosive barriers? the commander inquired. "Four to five days, Comrade Lieutenant General. Let's count five. What forces intend to carry out mining? - You will need at least four separate sapper

battalions. Let's get a battalion. But keep in mind, the work should be completed before February. Will you have time? I guess we'll make it before the

deadline. - All the better! Get

down to business. The plan for explosive barriers on the outskirts of Rostov was helped to develop by Alexei Ivanovich Chekhonin, chief of staff of the operational-engineering group, and my deputy, Vladimir Vladimirovich Artemiev. Zhurin gave valuable advice. By the morning of December 25, the plan was ready, and on December 26 it was approved by the Military Council of the 56th Army. We planned to lay 70,000 mines, although the GVIU promptly released only 14,000 to the engineering group: 56,000 mines of various types were to be made in Rostov. We started with the training of miners and the establishment of the production of mines. The command of the Southern Front subordinated a significant number of engineering troops to the 56th Army. All of them were engaged in the construction of frontiers along the Mius River, in the Dona'i delta near Rostov. Near Rostov, sappers, together with thousands of citizens, were digging anti-tank ditches. Blown by the violent steppe wind, burned by the frost, people were chiselling and chiseling the frozen, hard, like concrete, ground. The width of the anti-tank ditch at the top is about seven meters, at the bottom - up to three meters, the depth - also up to three meters. In a word, to dig one linear meter of an anti-tank ditch, you have to take out about fifteen cubic meters of earth! The sapper battalions assigned to the operational engineering group were also engaged in this thankless work. commanded these

battalion commanders in years, called up from the reserve, the majority of privates and sergeants were recruits. The sappers, shod in rough boots with windings, dressed in greasy padded jackets, did not look good, they did not even remotely resemble those that happened to be commanded in peacetime. But among them there were many communists and Komsomol members, most of the privates had a secondary education, and in this they also differed, but for the better, from the former fighters. The commander of one of the battalions, a military engineer of the 2nd rank, Efrem Trofimovich Martynenko, outwardly a purely civilian

man, calmly assured: - We will complete the task, Comrade Colonel. The people inquired if his fighters knew how to mine.

- They were not taught this, but if they are taught, they will be able to. The first thing we did was to remove the sapper battalions assigned to the group from the anti-tank ditches, take people to rest, and a day later began to teach them mine-exploding. The Rostov Regional Party Committee and the Military Council of the 56th Army entrusted the production of the missing number of mines to the industrial enterprises of Rostov, Novocherkassk and Aksai. However, before giving the industry an order for complex mines, it was necessary to improve them, taking into account the experience of combat, and develop a production technology that is optimal in local conditions. In a word, it was necessary to immediately create at least a small design bureau and at least a small laboratory-workshop. Here we are lucky! In the Rostov Communist People's Militia Regiment there were quite a few experienced, capable engineers, in particular, machine tool designers, designers, etc. I asked to send an electrical engineer to the operational engineering group, who, if possible, sniffed gunpowder.

"There is one," they answered in the regional committee of the party. — Engineer Gridnev. For battles near Rostov he was awarded the medal "For Courage". Front "Kulibin" engineer Gridnev Sergei Vasilyevich Gridnev turned out to be a very modest person, in whose eyes a

boundless kindness shone. "You see," he said at the first meeting, "before I designed power plants. Mines and power plants are not the same thing, but if necessary...

- Try it, Sergey Vasilievich! Designers are desperately needed! The most cunning mines require combinations of various contactors. For example, I talked about the design of a non-removable mine that exploded from shaking the ground and could be used to undermine enemy vehicles.

"I would like to improve its design," I said. - Make a mine capable of self-destruction at a set time. Can you? Gridnev examined the mine for some time, shook shoulders:

- What is it really for? I explained: we often mine behind enemy lines; it is possible that the enemy's soldiers and equipment will not be blown up on the part of the mines laid, then our troops will again occupy the mined area or the mined objects, and there will be a threat of blowing up our own soldiers and our own equipment on the surviving mines before the sappers have time to neutralize them. That is why we need self-destructing mines in a timely manner. "Understood," Gridnev nodded. "Let me think, Comrade Colonel?" It should have been assumed

that the newcomer was busy with the task for at least a day, but Gridnev returned an hour later, "It's done, Comrade Colonel. Here is a sketch. There were some flaws in the design he invented, but we immediately eliminated them, and the workshop-laboratory quickly produced an experimental batch with Gridnev's self-liquidators. A few days later, Sergei Vasilyevich just as successfully coped with another task: he made an original sample of an unrecoverable delayed-action mine from the available parts. On the same day, the Spaniards miners made one hundred of these mines. I had to be amazed at how quickly the new designer mastered the subtleties of mine blasting! But Gridnev revealed the secret of his success only at the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany.

"I didn't understand anything about mines when I went to your group," Sergey Vasilyevich admitted. - But if you remember, I came to the headquarters without you, you left for the contours, returned only three days later. And for "these three days, Major Chekhonin, Lieutenant Mineev, wonderful girls, instructors Olya Kretova and Masha Belova, provided me with

relevant literature, in some ways they were trained. So, while talking with you, I understood a little about mines. -

Well done! "It's

impossible without cunning in mine blasting, Ilya Grigorievich! They brought it on themselves! Gridnev objected, and we both laughed... Another episode from those times characterizing Gridnev. Once, while adjusting the fuse pin of a jumping fragmentation mine made from a 100-mm projectile, Sergei Vasilievich pulled the firing pin strongly, and the pin fell into thick grass. With difficulty holding the drummer with two fingers, the designer sat down, hoping to find the pin and insert it into place, but the pin disappeared. Meanwhile, the hole for it on the striker rod has already gone under the fuse body. It seemed that the stock itself was slowly but inevitably going deeper. The fingers, whitened from tension, are about to fail, the stem will break, and then - an explosion. Gridnev called out to the helping Red Army soldier. He approached, saw what was the matter, turned pale and rushed away ... Sergei Vasilyevich clenched his teeth. A cold sweat broke out on his forehead. The rod was leaving sweaty fingers. The fleeing Red Army soldier returned in an instant, held out a carnation:

- Here! Here! With a carnation, Gridnev pierced the skin of the finger that closed the second, extreme hole in the fuse rod, pushed the nail into this hole, and finally pulled out the rod.

- Knife! he demanded. With a given knife, Sergei Vasilievich decisively cut the skin of the pierced finger and freed his hand. True, they say, after that he closed his eyes and turned pale (the fuse of the MUV-1 type in question is still in service, for example, it is included in the set of signal mines. There are also emergencies. Therefore, I recommend using instead of the "P" shaped checks A second safety pin inserted into the top hole of the striker will give you a 200% security guarantee. Subsequently, it was Gridnev who first established the reason why the surprise mines began to fail, which proved to be excellent in Spain, on the Western Front and in Kharkov. One interesting detail of these mines was the harsh threads soaked in sulfuric acid. They stopped breaking off at the right time. Why? For me, I confess, it turned out to be a mystery. Other workers of the workshop-laboratory could not understand anything. A Sergei Vasilievich

I quickly realized that it was all about the frost ... Soon several more scientists, employees of the Rostov University, came to our laboratory, including associate professor-mathematician M.G. - Komsomol girls. They were eager to join the army, but the age of the guys and girls was not yet inductive. Alas, many of them did not wait for the call: in the summer of forty-two, after my departure from Rostov, during one of the barbaric bombings of the city, a large-caliber bomb hit that part of the university building where the master laboratory was located, and few of the young assemblers- the miners survived. They have earned the right to remain in people's memory, and it is very gratifying that the memory of these wonderful young people is immortalized on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Great Victory. On the eve of the new year, 1942, we handed over samples of new, improved mines to industrial enterprises. Parts for mines and fuses began to be supplied by Rosselmash, metal cases for high-explosive fragmentation were supplied by Krasny Aksai, and cases of wooden anti-tank and anti-personnel mines were supplied by the Rostov piano factory. On this occasion, we joked that the current Rostov music will not please the enemy! The training of the personnel of the sapper battalions attached to our group was successfully completed. On the instructions of the regional party committee, we also managed to organize a point for training partisans in the city of Shakhty, and in Rostov itself, mine-explosive courses for a possible underground. Our border guard commanders worked with the "partisans" and "underground fighters": captains Stepan Ivanovich Kazantsev, Trofim Pavlovich Chepak and Petr Antonovich Romanyuk, senior lieutenant Fyodor Andreyevich Kuznetsov, already familiar to the reader, lieutenants Ivanov and Karpov, instructors Kretova and Belova, some Spanish comrades, fluent in Russian. A group of people sent by the Krasnodar Regional Committee of the Party also studied at the courses: they studied the methods of conducting guerrilla warfare in case the enemy invaded the territory of the region. By the way, later we handed over to the Krasnodar partisans a large number of mine-exploding equipment, which they successfully used in the fight against the invaders. In a word, all the first ten days of stay in

In Rostov-on-Don, we allotted a few hours for rest. Even the celebration of the New Year was limited to forty-five minutes. But things did not stand still.

Chapter 12 Front Commander General Malinovsky

The winter offensive of the Soviet troops continued on all sectors of the huge front. At the end of December, Kozelsk and Kaluga, Kerch and Feodosia were liberated. An offensive operation was also being prepared in the Donbass region. The Military Council of the Southern Front withdrew from their positions and withdrew the troops of the 9th Army to the reserve command of the South-Western Direction, and transferred their former defense line to the 56th Army. Now the 56th Army had to cover a front line of three hundred kilometers, two hundred of which, however, fell on the coast of the Taganrog Bay and the Don Delta. Taking into account the length of the army's battle formations and fearing the enemy's exit across the hardened ice of the bay to the rear of our defending troops, the Front's Military Council demanded to speed up the creation of defensive lines, mine the banks of the bay and the Don delta, cut through artificial polynyas - first on the outskirts of Azov and Rostov, and then for one hundred and twenty kilometers along the southern shore of the bay. Mines, of course, were not enough, it was necessary to urgently increase their output, I had to reapply to the regional party committee, to the workers of Rostov, Novocherkassk, Aksai and Azov enterprises. The workers did not disappoint. In the meantime, mines were being made, sappers and the civilian population were sent to hollow open holes. Soldiers, women, teenagers, men released from military service - tens of thousands of people went out with crowbars, picks Shovels on the Don and Azov ice - greenish, unyielding, in some places already half a meter thick. Crowbars rang, shovels shuffled ... Hellish work! A strong, healthy man will not gouge much, moreover, in a hard frost, under a piercing wind. And it's not enough to break through the wormwood, it needs to be covered with poles so that it does not freeze, and straw and snow are thrown on the poles. But the trouble is, you won't get enough poles in the steppe! Considering the arrangement of polynyas as an extremely inefficient affair, leading to an unreasonable waste of strength, Zhurin and I reported our opinion

Army Major General V. V. Tsyganov. Full-faced, with eyebrows hanging over his eyes, the somewhat overweight general looked extremely stern. In fact, Viktor Viktorovich Tsyganov, whom I knew from the defense of Kharkov, was far from old, energetic, caring towards his subordinates. He was exacting, it is true, but his exactingness was never combined with shouting or rudeness, on the contrary, it was reinforced by an excellent understanding of human psychology and the ability to see beyond others. After listening to our arguments, Tsyganov and a member of the Military Council of the Army, Brigadier Commissar Komarov agreed that the polynyas did not justify themselves, and reported their point of view to the Military Council of the front. There, they were in no hurry to abolish polynyas. But a member of the Military Council of the Southern Front, I. I. Larin, having once again arrived in Rostov and inspected work on the coast, ordered to stop punching polynyas, and to intensify mining: to lay mines not only in the most dangerous directions, but also in any more or less suitable for the enemy to go ashore. At that time, both the mining of the defensive lines of the 56th Army and on its front line, and the mining of the "contours" were intensified. By the way, Major General Tsyganov strongly supported the idea of creating a system of trenches and advanced communications on the defensive lines. In the strip of the 56th Army, it was built and improved quickly. And in the tenth of January forty-three, when the construction and mining of defensive lines were in full swing, the Military Council of the Army also approved the proposal to create a special battalion of miners to strike at communications and strongholds of the enemy on the northern shore of the Taganrog Bay. "Wait a minute to rejoice," said

Tsyganov, looking at our faces with Zhurin. - Resonance from sorties can be

unexpected, so the sanction of the front commander is required. You, Colonel, seem to be familiar with Lieutenant General Malinovsky?

- Yes sir. We met in Spain. - So you go to the commander. He is unlikely to refuse

you. Just be sure to discuss the composition of the sabotage groups and ask them to provide these groups with the necessary equipment! The last time I saw Malinovsky was six years ago, in

stuck to the foot of the mountains in the provincial Spanish town of Jaen, where on one of the narrow medieval streets, like a gorge, there was a haven for saboteurs. Talking to us, Malinovsky was sitting on the sill of a high lancet window. A leather jacket is draped over broad shoulders. The edge of a black beret hung over his left eyebrow. At the headquarters of the Southern Front, a heavysset man with slickly combed hair and a preoccupied, puffy face got up from the table to meet me. Only his eyes remained the same, flashing a smile of recognition. The front commander listened to me carefully, the proposal to carry out sabotage behind enemy lines, making transitions through the ice of the Taganrog Bay, approved, allowed to involve volunteers from the units attached to the engineering group, as well as from among the commanders and fighters of the 8th engineer army. I said that Spanish volunteers work as instructors in the operational-engineering group:

“They are also rushing behind enemy lines, Comrade General!” How do they tolerate frost? After all, this is not the Mediterranean. — Used to, not the first year with us. - Well. Let them beat the Nazis, as they beat in Spain. But you take care of them, mosquito Wolf! - I obey, mosquito Malino (Malino is Malinovsky's pseudonym in Spain)! The commander laughed, wrote in sweeping handwriting on the report I submitted, "I agree. Malinovsky" and, returning the paper, wished me good luck in combat. I returned to the army headquarters elated. Now don't waste your time! Tsyganov said. - And may the sapper ingenuity help you. Special battalion, The special battalion should have selected people not only strong in spirit, but also very physically resilient. Senior Lieutenant Nikolai Ivanovich Moklyakov, acting commander of the 522nd separate engineer battalion, was approved as commander of the special battalion. This tall, strong thirty-five-year-old commander joined the Komsomol at the age of eighteen, and at twenty-four he joined the party. Before the war, Moklyakov worked as an engineer at the Novo-Kramatorsk plant, he could evacuate with his family to the rear, but wrote on the form of the issued armor: "I am Russian, a communist, my place is at the forefront!" Moklyakov accepted the offer to take command of the special battalion without hiding his joy.

Moklyakov's commissar was the senior political instructor Zakhar Veniaminovich Veniaminov, who in the past was repeatedly elected secretary of the party organization of one of the large enterprises and has experience working with people. Veniaminov was over forty, but the commissar did not complain about his health. In addition, he possessed an enviable calmness, did not make hasty decisions, and one of his favorite phrases was the phrase "It was hard to brainstorm!" At first, they intended to select volunteers for the special battalion from privates and sergeants on the general formation of units. But when, at the command "Volunteers, two steps forward!" The entire former Moklyakov battalion stepped forward, the original intention had to be abandoned. In the rest of the battalions, as well as in the 26th brigade of the 8th sapper army, volunteers were selected without formation, talking with each one personally. In the third week of January, the composition of the special battalion was determined. The commanders and fighters were given new winter uniforms, camouflage suits, PPSH assault rifles, sapper knives, a set of accessories for working with mines, wire cutters, and grenades. The instructors of the operational-engineering group immediately began to teach newcomers the art of mining and operations behind enemy lines. But that was only the beginning! It still had to be decided how the sabotage groups would move on the hummocky ice of the Taganrog Bay, covering from 30 to 60 kilometers in one trip, how they would maintain contact with their base and with each other. There was no need to think about overcoming the bay on foot or on skis: neither on foot nor on skis on ice can you get far. Therefore, sled teams are required. The military council of the army helped to get sleds, allocated a sufficient number of horses. But the very first test drive on the ice discouraged. The horses, although they were shod with all care, could not go, their hooves were parted, and the wind began to turn the sleigh. Leaping onto the ice, the miners tried to help the horses by holding the sled, but they slipped and began to make downright circus entrecha. What is a parable? After all, local fishermen drive on the ice in the calmest way! Let's go to the fishermen. They explained that iron "undercuts" should be attached to the sleigh runners so that they cut through the ice like knives, preventing the sleigh from sliding from side to side. Horses - to be reforged into sharp spikes, and "bouzuluks" - a kind of horseshoe with three spikes - should be attached to soldier's

can not only move confidently on the ice, but also climb a steep bank. They made undercuts for the sleigh, reforged the horses, got "bouzuluks" - a new snag. We were convinced that one night would not be enough to leave on a mission and return to base in the morning. The decision suggested itself: to depart from our shore before dark, so that at nightfall we would be ten to twelve kilometers from the enemy, and before the sortie we had a little rest. However, the movement of sabotage groups in the daytime could easily be detected by enemy aircraft. This means that camouflage clothing was required not only for miners, but also for horses! I had to get white cloth, sew wide camouflage blankets with hoods for horses. They dressed the horses in new attire - a picture from knightly times, and nothing more! But already from a distance of a kilometer, the harness against the background of the frozen bay and hummocks became completely indistinguishable. The task of communication between the battle groups and the sled teams left for the night in the hummocks not far from the northern coast was solved simply: they provided the sleds with pocket flashlights with multi-colored glasses and multi-colored matches made in our workshop laboratory. It was only not possible to get radios for communication with combat groups, but even the Military Council of the front could not help here: there were no radios in the right quantity then ... In the last days of January, I reported to the army commander that the special battalion was ready to carry out combat missions. General Tsyganov set the task of preventing the enemy from moving freely along the northern coast of the Taganrog Bay, destroying manpower and equipment behind enemy lines, and destroying enemy communications. The action plan of the special battalion was endorsed by the head of the intelligence department of the 56th Army, Colonel Yegnarov, Major Zhurin, the head of the operational department of the army, Major N. D. Saltykov and myself. The commander approved the plan without amendments. Frosty January morning. The snow-covered road stretches over a high steep bank. The bay lies on the right below, sparkling in the early sun with blocks of hummocks, darkening with ice-holes, toy figures of fishermen and sledge fishing teams. To the left is the steppe. She was only slightly powdered, through the rare grains the earth cracked from the cold peeps through, and in the beams the snow lies in plump featherbeds head ... Making a gentle turn, the pink lips feathered gently down with your

units of the special battalion go to Yeysk, Shabelsk and Port Katon. Combat outposts ahead: a control platoon under the command of a dashing lieutenant Vladimir Dmitrievich Kondrashev. Behind the combat guards on good horses is the command of a special consolidated battalion. Behind the command are straight columns of companies. A smoking camp kitchen, on the front of which the cook sits, even in the cold, not parting with his three-row and tormenting furs. The sleigh of military paramedic Serdyuk, shy like a girl, a sleigh with ammunition, provisions ... One company and commanders of the border guards are going with me in cars to Yeysk. There will be a command headquarters for sorties behind enemy lines. Manuel Belda is on his way - a Spaniard commander, a hero of campaigns in the rear of the Nazis, who does not lose heart under any circumstances. He smiles, and I'm sure he said something to his comrades again. That's the kind of person he is! You don't even need a political officer with him. His stories about Spain, about Dolores Ibarruri, about the battles with the Falangists raise the morale of the soldiers, call for self-sacrifice and exploits in the name of the Motherland. The silent junior lieutenant Yatsenko is driving, always being the first to notice that one of the comrades is tired, that someone has been sent a sad letter, who knows how to calm and support a friend even with a silent presence. Rides a former Spanish pilot, now a Red Army fighter Marya no Chico. Chico is Spanish for boy. The surname does not fit Iariano. He has the shoulders and chest of a weightlifter, and the legs of a marathon runner. Chico! Cheerful guy from Cuenca! Parents dreamed of seeing their son as a priest. But he did not recognize the commandments of Christ, who taught to humble himself and endure, and when the Nazis attacked the Spanish people, he joined the Republican army and became a fighter pilot. He preached the truth with the fire of the I-16. And now I'm ready to preach it with mines and machine guns. He says other conversations with fascism are excluded. The battalion is coming. Donetsk, Moscow, Cordoba, Ryazan, Valencia, Tula, Barcelona, Altai and Basque guys go and go. Communists and Komsomol members are coming, for whom the battle with the enemy is a matter of life and honor. Arriving at the location, I first of all carried out the order of the army commander; contacted the commander of the Azov military flotilla, Rear Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, to agree on the interaction of the special battalion with the sailors. With the sailors of the flotilla to us

already had a chance to meet and perform joint tasks. Somewhat earlier, the operational group sent to the Azov region, where detachments of torpedo boats No. 14 and No. 20, two mining instructors, were guarding the coast. Our instructors and personnel of the detachments laid land and sea mines in the Azov region. There I met the commander of Detachment 14, Caesar Lvovich Kunikov. I remember that he gave the impression of an enterprising, decisive person. How was it possible to know with whom military fate brought? More than a year remained until February forty-three, until the night when a special detachment under the command of Major Ts. L. Kunikov managed to occupy a small bridgehead on the western shore of the Tsemess Bay, near the suburbs of Novorossiysk - Stanichki, which later received the name "Malaya Zemlya" ... After listening to Rear Admiral Gorshkov asked me to come to Primorsko-Akhtarsk, sending a U-2 for me. The weather was clear, windless, the air route from Yeysk to Primorsko-Akhtarsk took only forty minutes. The stocky, broad-chested, fair-haired Rear Admiral looked very young. I even doubted whether he had reached his thirtieth birthday. And a little later I learned that the first impression turned out to be correct - Sergei Georgievich Gorshkov was only thirty-two years old in forty-two. After reading the letter from the commander of the 56th Army, Gorshkov nodded: "Sallying behind enemy lines is a good thing." But you have

the same people, as I understand it, land? I confirmed that there really were no sailors in the special battalion.

- Here's something. And you still have to fight at sea, albeit frozen. Therefore, Comrade Colonel, it is necessary to involve sailors in sorties. But we will agree on this later, but now listen to my advice ... And the rear admiral did not stint on advice, for which all the miners, from the battalion commander to the riders, did not get tired of remembering him afterwards. Sergei Georgievich Gorshkov generally paid great attention to sorties behind enemy lines. By his order, battle groups were formed from the crews of the ships, which went to the northern shore of the bay with us and on their own. He responded immediately to any of our requests.

Chapter 13

Campaigns behind enemy lines through the Taganrog Bay began with failures. As soon as we placed the fighters in their apartments, developed the first route and appointed the day and hour for the exit of the combat groups, strong east winds blew, a snowstorm howled. I had to sit out in the fishing huts. Veniaminov joked gloomily: "We are waiting for the weather by the sea, Comrade Colonel!" Finally, towards morning. On February 3, it was quiet. Moklyakov, company commanders, Spanish comrades asked if it was time to start. It was felt that people yearned for the case. Well? If the weather is set, it's time! At three o'clock in the afternoon, the sleigh teams with the miners drove out onto the ice and soon disappeared behind the hummocks, behind the snow dust. And in the evening, at the beginning of the seventh, the sky again became slate-gray, the clouds that crawled over the steppe and the bay seemed to crush them, snow fell in large flakes, the east wind howled and swept. At night, the battalion did not sleep. Posts were on duty on the shore until morning, trying to see something in the blinding night whirlwind, giving signals with flashlights, but no one saw or heard anything. Immeasurable is the anxiety of the mother who led her son into battle. But the anxiety of the commander, who sent his fighters on a dangerous mission, is also immeasurable ... The fighters of Captain Chepak were the first to return in the morning. He talked about what happened. Battle groups moved close to each other, maintaining the direction in azimuth. A snowstorm caught them halfway, and the groups reached the hummocks in front of the northern shore only by midnight. After an hour or two it seemed that the wind had weakened and the snow was not falling so much. They began to push forward. Supporting comrades and horses, falling and rising, they covered another six kilometers. And then, in the snowy turbidity, enemy flares soared up. In their flickering light, the miners made out two ships frozen in the ice. From there, from unknown ships, German machine guns hit. The commanders gave the order to withdraw. The return trip was no less difficult. The exhausted collective farm horses had to be pulled and pushed. Overcoming hummocks in the middle of the bay, Captain Chepak lost sight of

“We shot into the air and exploded grenades, all to no avail,” Chepak sighed wearily. - No one was found ... Search groups were immediately sent to help those who did not return. They went deep into the bay, searched the shores in the area where the special battalion was located, but they could not find anyone in the snowstorm. The wind and snow stopped only in the afternoon. Then, finally, our long wait was rewarded: in the distance, black dots appeared on the ice field. Teams with fresh horses immediately rushed towards them. They took out Francisco Gaspar's squad. Francisco himself got out of the bag with difficulty. He parted his lips with difficulty: -

Mui frio [Mui frio - very cold (Spanish)] An hour later, Chico Mariano got out alone. In a snowstorm, he fought off his comrades, but stubbornly followed the compass and overcame forty kilometers of an icy road in a snowstorm and frost. Climbing ashore, Chico did not at all resemble that handsome man who was seen off with admiring glances by young fishermen from Yeysk. The hat with earflaps is tightly tied under the chin, the balaclava is thickly covered with frost, in the oval of the balaclava there is skin darkened from the cold and immensely tired eyes. And yet, having climbed ashore, he straightened his shoulders and straightened up ... Soon, not far from Port Caton, Kanel led the battle group. Kanel himself got frostbitten very badly. Nose swollen, legs and arms swollen. Yes, what to say! In order to take off Kanel's hat with earflaps, which had frozen to his hair, he had to be held by the stove, pounded with snow. Kanel was rushed to a military hospital. The last to get out of the ice and hummocks were the people of Captain Kazantsev. The captain's group, returning, reached the southern shore of the bay, slightly east of the Shabelskaya Spit. The steep banks did not allow to go upstairs. The horses in the deep coastal drifts stood up and had to be abandoned. In search of a convenient entrance to the shore, people dispersed, getting out in twos, threes. And one person never got out. Not that day, not the next two. It was our Spanish comrade Manuel Belda. A native of Andalusia, a student who changed books for a rifle to defend the republic, a brave fighter who became the commander of a division of the Republican army of Spain at the age of twenty-two, a communist who considered it lucky to fight fascism again even in the rank of private! An ardent patriot of his homeland, he so dreamed of seeing his native Valencia again! And here it is frozen! I didn't keep my p

given to Lieutenant General Malinovsky, and still cannot justify myself to myself ... The weather settled on the second day. Then new groups of miners simultaneously went to the rear of the enemy from three points. One of the first to penetrate the northern coast, quietly crossed the fascist patrol path, set mines and destroyed an enemy truck with soldiers - the combat group of junior lieutenant I. M. Yatsenko. Groups of Lieutenant P. A. Romanyuk, groups of Barcelona residents Ippolito Noges and Francisco Gaspar, junior lieutenant F. E. Kozlov, junior lieutenant A.V. Ustarossa and Hererra, Valencian Angel Alberka, former mechanic Juan, foreman M.A. Repin, private V. Lipnitsky, former Donbass miner Sergeant G.I. Nenepo, Francisco Gulion and Rafael Estrello. So that not a single winter night was wasted, so that blows were inflicted on the enemy continuously, the miners of the special battalion worked, in the language of peacetime, in three shifts: while some were making sorties, others were preparing for a campaign, and still others were resting. Every night two to six groups penetrated behind enemy lines. And every night explosions thundered on the northern coast, enemy cars, tractors with guns flew into the air, fascist warehouses exploded. By mid-February, the Nazis were forced to stop the night traffic on the coastal roads between Berdyansk and Taganrog. In the mornings, before letting the cars in, the occupiers sent teams of sappers to check the roads, tried to trawl the roadway with heavily loaded sledges. Then we began to lay mines that missed the trawl and exploded under the armored personnel carrier pushing the sled, and delayed action mines that were put on alert an hour or two after the trawl. Explosions on the roads continued to rumble. The enemy tried to break through the polynya near the northern shore - our miners got over the polynyas with the help of boards or appeared where the coast was considered very steep and impassable. The enemy strengthened the protection of the coast. However, you couldn't put a patrol every hundred meters - there weren't enough personnel, and the miners easily found passages in the chain of enemy posts. The Nazis rushed to mine the coast. This

“It was more dangerous. In two nights, the battle groups lost three fighters. And then they learned not only to remove enemy mines, “but also to change their installation sites, to destroy the enemy with his own traps. Once the miners almost closely approached the shore occupied by the Nazis. Angel Alberca, who led the patrol, fell into the snow and felt that his leg was entangled in the wire. Barrage! It is possible that it contains a tension mine. Then, at the slightest attempt to pull out the leg - an explosion, death, disruption of the task ...

- Stand! Minefield! Angel signaled to his comrades. Holding the boot by the top, he carefully pulled his leg out of it. He took out a mine-surprise from the bag, just as carefully lowered it into a felt boot, wrapped a scarf around his bare foot, “shod it” in a duffel bag and led the patrol further. The group went to a given area, mined the road, safely returned to the sleigh left in the hummocks. Only then did they notice the strange “shoes” of Alberca.

- Nothing. Fritz will pay for my frozen heel! Angel scoffed. A policeman who ran over to our side a day later told, among other things, about Alberca's felt boots. The chief lieutenant, who was bypassing the guard posts, noticed and ordered the delivery of a strange object. The soldiers carefully disconnected the wire that entangled the boots from their own tension mines, carried the trophy ashore. Then they took out a bundle from the felt boots, tightly tied with twine, cut the twine and went to the forefathers. Since then, the battalion joked that Angel managed to hit the Nazis with his felt boots across the entire bay! .. Getting more and more “surprises”, the enemy got nervous. Every evening, the fascist military outposts fired dozens of rockets into the air, probed the bay with searchlight beams, and opened frantic rifle and machine-gun fire at every shadow. Supporting submachine gunners and machine gunners, fascist mortars and guns nailed on the ice. Guessing that the miners leave on the ice before dark, and return at dawn, the enemy threw fighters against small combat groups. But it was February 1942, not June 1941! Enemy planes attempting to patrol the bay collided in the air with Soviet fighters and, as a rule, fled. The fascist command tried to organize sorties of its own units on our shore. They

they also used sleigh teams, and some of the soldiers were allowed to skate. But met by the fire of our units guarding the shore, the Nazis each time hastily retreated. Once or twice fascist combat groups collided with ours on the ice, and also quickly retreated, not accepting the battle, leaving explosives. Soon, the enemy abandoned the idea of penetrating the southern coast altogether... The fighting mare causes fire on herself. Of course, we also had failures. Somehow, enemy fighters managed to detect and attack a group of junior lieutenant Kozlov returning from a mission. One Red Army soldier was killed, several people were injured, all the horses were beaten. And Lieutenant P. A. Romanyuk immediately turned to me: "Comrade Colonel! Let me get the horses out! - Are you trying for

the kitchen? "The kitchen, of course, Comrade Colonel.

Dumka to make stuffed

horses. - Understood! Can you? - Do not doubt! Romanyuk and his assistant junior

lieutenant I. A.

Naumenko did a great job. Two days later, three teams headed to the northern shore. On the first sledge sat Romanyuk's fighters, on the last, covered with white panels, stuffed horses lay. A noisy gang of Shabel children ran behind the teams: - Look, look, hooves! .. These are the horses that the Nazi beat! .. Romanyuk and the soldiers in the dead of night stopped

a kilometer from the northern coast, behind a snow roller. They "raised" the dummies, lit the fuses of signal matches, rushed into the sled and drove teams along the coast so as not to suffer after what would begin in seven minutes ... The enemy was nervous, launched rockets, and when seven minutes later the first red signal flashed near the mock-ups a match, they were completely alarmed: beams of searchlights swept, rockets took off in flocks. And then one of the spotlight beams rested on the "horses". What's up here! Machine guns followed by mortars. Roar, explosions, columns of water from under the broken ice! The Nazis fired furiously for at least half an hour. The shooting began to subside after the dummies were finally scattered by the explosion. In the morning, Romaniuk handed me an excellent diagram of enemy firing points and mortar batteries in the area where

there were models: the lieutenant's invention turned out to be very useful! Subsequently, the miners more than once used various layouts to detect enemy firing points, forcing the enemy to waste hundreds of mines and shells. Blown up on February 16, two bridges near the Budenovskaya station, where the Nazi garrison stood, led the invaders to the idea that the successful actions of Our miners are carried out with the help of partisans, and the partisans are assisted by "local civil authorities" from fascist proteges. People who fled from the occupied northern coast told about it. We added fuel to the fire: we destroyed the fascist commandant's office in Budenovskaya. The Nazis, having gone berserk, immediately shot all the local policemen ... Atomic Notebook

On the night of February 19, following the order of General Tsyganov, the combat groups of Junior Lieutenant Kozlov and Sergeant Lipnitsky captured two prisoners. From the testimonies of the prisoners it was clear that the situation was favorable for delivering a powerful blow to the northern shore of the bay, and the army command decided to destroy the enemy garrison on the so-called Crooked Spit. The operation was timed to coincide with the 24th anniversary of the Red Army. In agreement with Rear Admiral Gorshkov, a combined detachment was created for the operation from a reinforced company of the marines of the battalion of Major Maloletko and combat groups of the special battalion. Before sunset on February 22, the combined detachment under the command of Maloletko set off. The fascist garrison turned out to be unprepared to fight back, and the garrisons from neighboring settlements could not come to his aid. The miners cut the lines of communication, heavily mined the roads leading to Krivaya Kosa, and covered the flanks of the advancing detachment. Marines and miners captured prisoners, blew up two artillery batteries and three searchlight installations, and destroyed all means of communication. And the group of foreman Maxim Alekseevich Repin captured and delivered to the headquarters of the special battalion a large number of various documents of the enemy, in particular, a thick general notebook of a German officer from engineering units who accidentally spent the night on Krivoy Kos and died in battle. The notebook was dotted with graphs and formulas, accompanied by explanations. Not knowing German, I gave the notebook to one of the officers to read, who did not find anything interesting in it:

— All some kind of synthetics, Comrade Colonel. Ordinary Fritz "ersatz". Yes, even nonsense about atomic energy ... But I did not throw away the notebook. You never know! And there will be no place. The successful attack on the Crooked Spit gave rise to the idea of inducing panic in the ranks of the enemy. From the waste of plywood, poles, wire and matting, our craftsmen made "tanks", "guns", "trucks" and "mortars", which even from a short distance, half a kilometer, looked like disguised tanks, guns, trucks and mortars. On the night of February 26, all this props were taken to the northern coast and installed three kilometers from the enemy. A quarter of an hour after the sled with the miners drove away from the models, the lights of self-igniting matches began to blink there. The rays of the fascist searchlights, of course, crossed on the "Potemkin village" built by miners. The memory of Crooked Spit was fresh, the enemy decided, apparently, that this time the Russians had thrown even greater forces against him, and opened a powerful fire from guns and mortars. To "encourage" the fascist gunners, the miners prudently left mats moistened with kerosene near the mock-ups. With "successful hits" the Nazis set fire to the mats. And then the smoke bombs set by the miners worked. Smoke, perfectly visible in the beams of searchlights, swirled thickly over the salvage materials, flames shot up among its clubs, the Nazis realized that they had aimed, and brought down a hurricane of artillery and mortar fire on the burning rubbish ... Meanwhile, February ended, March came. The ice cracked, the old polynyas widened, new polynyas appeared. It became more and more difficult to make sorties to the northern coast. The days of farewell to the Taganrog Bay were approaching. Rear Admiral Gorshkov, taking this into account, asked to send instructors to train sailors in operations behind enemy lines, and we sent Chepak and Rafael to Primorsko Akhtarsk. And they themselves prepared their last big operation on the ice: the destruction of two barges with military equipment in the backwaters of the village of Veselo-Voznesenskaya, from which the enemy noticed combat groups of miners on the day of the first, unsuccessful campaign. Preparing for the last outing very carefully. Particular attention was paid to weapons, waterproof shoes and the construction of elongated bridges to overcome gaps and cracks in the ice. The group selected the most experienced guides - Sgt.

Korolenko, Red Army soldiers Troyan, Simonenko, Shaposhnikov, Chico Mariano and Jose. But many considered themselves deeply offended by the fact that they did not get into the group. First of all, the commander of the control platoon, Lieutenant Vladimir Kondrashev, who was repeatedly promised participation in sorties. I had to include Kondrashev in the group. But then it turned out to be impossible to refuse military assistant Serdyuk. After all, a person specially studied the mine-exploding business, so he waited, so hoped! However, SMERSH authorized officer Afanasy Dymov, after looking through the list of the group, shook his head:

- It won't. I was alarmed and upset: - How is it "not going to work"? Why? - And

therefore. I've been forgotten. Or do you not trust? I just spread my hands and entered his name on the list ... Together with the command of the special battalion, I awaited the results of the group's actions and its return to the observation post in the village of Shabelskaya. At five o'clock in the morning we went ashore. Under the cliff, swollen ice covered with melt water dimly darkened. At five o'clock eleven minutes in complete silence rose from the darkness in the direction of Veselo Voznesenskaya incredibly bright sultans of fire. I pressed the stopwatch button. A thin arrow raced around and counted another twenty-seven divisions before the double sound of an explosion came. The sound died out, the sultans of fire fell, but chains of flashing lights instantly stretched out along the entire northern coast, a minute or two later, artillery flashes trembled, and then the cannonade was heard. The group returned safely to Shabelskaya. Lieutenant Kondrashev distinguished himself in this sortie. Together with two fighters, the first crawled up to the barges, "removed the sentry, opened the way for the demolitionists. Climbing onto the decks of the barges, cluttered with boxes of mines and shells, the fighters of the group set up delayed action mines and moved away unnoticed. Evdokia Ivanovna - Russian mother Garcia Canel Heat and wind broke, the ice shifted, the high sky shone brightly blue above the sprawling roads. It's time to return to Rostov! The headquarters of the special battalion summed up: sabotage groups of miners went behind enemy lines one hundred and ten times; on enemy roads, patrol paths, along communication lines, near buildings occupied by the invaders, seven hundred and four mines; mine explosions and small arms fire destroyed more than a hundred

enemy soldiers and officers, fifty-six fascist vehicles and two tanks were disabled, seventy-four telephone and telegraph poles, two bridges, two barges, four cars with searchlights were blown up; the battalion and sailors of the Azov flotilla forced the enemy to deploy about two infantry divisions from Mariupol to Taganrog to defend the northern coast. In the tenth of March, units of the special battalion left Yeysk, Shabelsk and Port-Katon. The villagers poured out of their houses, crowded along the roadsides. The miners were seen off as relatives and friends. Yes, in a month and a half we really became close to each other! The fishermen daily delivered baskets of fresh fish to the company kitchens, the women of the village did not spare firewood and dung, so that the frozen fighters and commanders would warm up well, give those who returned from campaigns a hot fruit decoction, milk, tea brewed to blackness, knit warm gloves and socks for their guests, and the soldiers helped people as much as they could with housework. On the way to Rostov, I stopped in Shabelsk to say goodbye to the collective farmer Evdokia Ivanovna Pustasheva. Garcia Canel's branch lodged in the Pustashev's hut. The reader probably remembers that from the first sortie behind enemy lines, Kanel returned severely frostbitten and was immediately sent to the hospital. They felt that he needed to have his fingers and toes amputated. Evdokia Ivanovna, having learned about this,

cried:

"But how can you hurt such a guy?" I won't let you, I won't! I rushed to the pantry, stocked up on jars and pots, put on a sheepskin coat and, despite my old age, went on the ice to Yeysk, to a military hospital. On that day, Kanel received the first transmission: a pot of goose fat to lubricate frostbitten parts of the body, a pot of sour cream and a stack of fried fish. Two, three times a week, a Russian woman went to Yeysk, whose son fought on another front, wore gifts to the Spanish guy, instructed doctors on how to rub goose fat into frostbitten skin. And returned Garcia Canel to the system! Since then Kanel called Evdokia Ivanovna his Russian mother. How could I not say goodbye to her? .. I also went into the hut of Ivan Savvich Onoprienko, a fifty-year-old fisherman, who gave a sheepskin coat to a young Red Army soldier:

"It's cold in the greatcoat, son, but I'll spend the winter on the stove and without a jacket!" Many hands had to be shaken in parting, not in one eye to see tears ... The battalion was leaving. And from the roadside it rushed: "Come back! Come with victory in the autumn! For grapes, for apples! We are waiting!"

Chapter 14 Engineer Gridnev "chemically" OZM

Spring comes to the city earlier than to the countryside. The snow has melted on the streets of Rostov, the steep-browed cobblestones of the pavements glisten wetly in the sun, in the suburbs the cast-iron pedestals of the standpipes resemble heavy black birds squatted down to rest. First of all, we go to the laboratory-workshop. Here, as always, there is a pungent smell of Fickford cord and burning incendiary shells, work is in full swing. During my absence, Gridnev, Medvedev, Kosoe, Belova and Kretova set up the production of guided anti-personnel mines, created reliable models of bouncing and lever mines that explode under the bottom of the tank. Artemiev, Chekhonin, Mineev, Martynenko, Kozlov and Fedorov, who are in charge of mining the contours, have recently received good products. - And

we made a knockout charge from ammonal, Comrade Colonel! Gridnev says with a touch of triumph. I look at Sergei Vasilyevich with distrust. Before leaving for the coast, we talked about the manufacture of fragmentation-barrage mines, the so-called OZM. Factories produce OZM using conventional 152mm projectiles. Installed in the ground, OZM, on a signal or under mechanical action, fly to the surface, explode at a height of one or two meters, and hit the enemy's manpower. It would not be difficult to design OZS from captured shells, but we did not have expelling powder cartridges. They must be obtained or made. "Can't you use ammonal instead of gunpowder?" —

asked Gridnev.

- Nothing will work. Ammonal has blasting properties and will smash a mine. Make a powder charge, Sergey Vasilyevich! On that they parted, and here, please, a surprise!

- How did you manage to outwit the ammonal, Comrade Gridnev? -
Let's go to the field, we'll show you!

- Alas, now there is no time, I'm going to the army headquarters. But as soon as I get back - hold on, will we make a strict check? The headquarters of the 56th Army was located not in Rostov, but in one of the suburban villages. The local residents were evacuated, the streets looked orphaned. I found Zhurin in the hut where the headquarters of the engineering troops was located. In the field buttonholes of Yevgeny Mikhailovich there are no longer two, but three rectangles: lieutenant colonel. I congratulated him, asked how things were going, what thoughts

they live in the headquarters of the front. - Things are great. We are creating a reserve

of anti-tank mines," Zhurin replied. - And thoughts ... Have you read the order of the Supreme Commander of February 23? The initiative is in our hands, so we are getting ready for a hot summer! I asked if Yevgeny Mikhailovich had given the commander of the army my report on the desirability of creating special guards brigades for operations on enemy lines of communication. I prepared this memorandum during the long nights of waiting for the miners who had gone to the northern shore of the Taganrog Bay. Zhurin handed over the report, but he could not say anything about General Tsyganov's attitude towards it.

- I know one thing: the commander ordered, as soon as you appear, to direct you to him. Here we go! The army commander lodged in a small, unsightly-looking hut. The guards, who knew Zhurin, let Tsyganov through without unnecessary formalities. The canopy and the upper room sparkle with cleanliness. The commander, a member of the Military Council, Komarov, and the chief of staff, Arushunyan, are sitting at a boiling samovar.

"Sit down, sit down," interrupting Zhurin's appeal with a wave of his hand, invites Tsyganov. "We've made it just in time, we'll have tea." But right there at the table he asks to tell in detail about the sorties of miners behind enemy lines. Naturally, we are talking about my memorandum addressed to I. V. Stalin. The army commander says that he has read the report carefully and agrees with the conclusions drawn. Taking this opportunity, I ask if it is possible to create at least one guards battalion of miners at the 56th Army for a start. Tsyganov shakes his head.

- Will not work. First of all, communications will be needed, and who will provide them without the approval of the states? Try contacting the Front Commander. If they ask my opinion, I will support. And now, comrade engineers, I will ask you to urgently deal with mine

fields in the army zone. Miners' cares in spring The next morning, Zhurin and I set off for the Rostov contours. The southern sun warmed, the snow in the steppe turned gray, settled, melted, the hillocks became bare, the air above us trembled, the rutted roads swayed. From the car, I saw rows of barbed wire three and four stakes, earthen blotches over the bunkers, narrow bunker loopholes, as if squinted for sight, lines of trenches, zigzags of trenches. The fighters of the 8th sapper army, Lieutenant General A.S. Gundorov, the 28th Defense Construction Directorate, Colonel Maltsev, and Rostov residents did a good job! And here are the anti-tank ditches. Filled with melt water, they are like irrigation canals. It is disturbing to think that ditches have already been marked on enemy maps. It is not in vain that fascist reconnaissance aircraft are crawling in the sky! However, an unpleasant disappointment awaits the enemy. Wherever he poked himself, he would stumble upon mines everywhere. The troops of the 56th Army and the operational engineering group installed about twenty-seven thousand mines on the contours. The capricious Rostov winter, with its fierce frosts, storms and snowfalls, suddenly replaced by long thaws, of course, made life difficult for the miners. Wooden cases of mines, installed during frosts, swelled during the thaw. They swell even now, when every day it becomes warmer. Mines have to be checked. All to one. Even metal ones. It's not easy, it's dangerous. Zhurin said that several fighters died and several were injured. Losses are possible in the future. But it is impossible to refuse to check and restore minefields. By the summer, they should be in full combat readiness ... It takes almost two days to get acquainted with the mining of contours and rear lines in the army zone. I am convinced that mines will have to be removed near the field roads: the roads are sagging, truck drivers are driving around difficult areas, turning onto virgin soil, accidents are possible. The mining of the rear lines is better to be divided into two stages. On the second day, in the evening, Gridnev arrived from Rostov, bringing fragmentation-barrage mines with an expelling cartridge from ammonal. We go to one of the outer sections of the contours, to the open steppe. Gridnev with the fighters sets up two OZMs at a distance from each other. We descend into the dark, smelling of damp earth

and a damp tree room for a bunker, we settle down at the viewing slots. Explosion booms. Shards are knocking

on the bunker. - Twelve meters. Too high! Chekhonin notes. The second shell exploded three meters above the ground. The targets placed within a radius of 60 - 100 meters were hit to one and all! Gridnev received congratulations. I also congratulated the designer, but offered to continue testing in order to achieve stability of OZM explosions at a height of two to three meters. Artemiev looked at the matter differently:

— Or maybe it's good that the shells are able to fly far? Indeed, in this case, they can be used not only in defense, but also in the offensive! I expressed doubts about the need for such use of projectiles by sappers and the possibility of achieving good results, but I must admit that my doubts were unfounded. Artemiev did not part with his idea, he proved its value. In the last months of the war, the long-range engineering mines created by him, Sergeant Lyadov and other sappers were successfully used in the storming of enemy cities. A new attempt to create special brigades Spring was gaining momentum. The Krasnodar Territory and the Rostov Region directed all their efforts to preparing for the sowing season, plowing and sowing. One after another, our partisan schools were curtailed. True, I tried to defend them, arguing that school graduates could continue to operate successfully in other areas, for example, in the Crimea or on the northern coast of the Sea of Azov. but they objected to me: their own partisans are operating there, and the Red Army and party organs are helping them! "Your partisans!" In the territory occupied by the enemy, a large number of partisan detachments and sabotage groups were indeed left or created. But after all, the partisan formations, with rare exceptions, did not have radio communications, and their supply with explosives, mines and weapons left much to be desired. And there was still no decision to create leadership bodies for partisan forces. I was constantly thinking about what to do, what to do to intensify the strikes against enemy communications? Domingo Ungria was tormented by the same thoughts, Captain Kazantsev spoke about the same more than once. So I returned to the idea of creating special brigades to operate behind enemy lines. A proposal to create such brigades with attached

Three of us wrote detailed states and requirements for material and technical support, but the three of us signed it and sent it to Moscow to P.K. Ponomarenko. But he did not support this idea. In our opinion, the units of the proposed brigades were supposed to disable enemy communications, destroy his military equipment and manpower during transportation, widely involving local partisans in sabotage work. In the meantime, new ideas were hatched for strengthening strikes against enemy communications, the operational-engineering brigade completed the inspection and reinstallation of thirty-seven thousand anti-tank and twenty thousand anti-personnel mines, created reserves of forty-five thousand mines in tank-hazardous areas, and installed twenty-five powerful radio mines. The radio mines were laid by our former sergeants, now lieutenants N. Sergeev, I. Goltsov, I. Kuznetsov and other most experienced miners. And separate groups of saboteurs continued to successfully penetrate into the enemy rear. In short, a lot has been done. However, General Tsyganov still insisted on strengthening and improving the defense of the army. He even objected to the demand of the new chief of the engineering troops of the Red Army, General M.P. Vorobyov, to second the operational engineering group to his disposal. General Tsyganov wanted to keep it for action behind enemy lines. Frankly, I myself wanted to stay in Rostov, wait for the start of active hostilities, test in practice some new items and a number of improved mines. However, the energetic presentations of the commander of the 56th Army to the headquarters of the Southern Front did not yield any results.

Chapter 15 Snack from the new boss

The deafeningly roaring Li-2, having fairly chatted the passengers on the air pockets, began to descend. Arable lands, forests, ravines stood on edge, some nimble river rushed to flow to the zenith, but in the next mine the pilot completed the turn, and everything returned to its place. Push - we roll on the airfield. Moscow greeted us not like in April with a bright sun, warmth, dried up sidewalks, crowds, queues at shops. On the walls of houses, on the windshield of the Emka, sunbeams jumped: women were washing windows. My God, they clean the windows! Maybe soon all life, like the earth under the wing of an airplane, will fall into place? Arriving at the NPO, I go to my office. First I call the chief of staff, but he is not there. Then I called the new, fourth in a row over the past year, chief of the engineering troops, General Mikhail Petrovich Vorobyov. Do we know each other. They met back in the fortieth, when Mikhail Petrovich served as the general inspector of engineering troops, and in the forty-first they saw each other on the Western Front: (Vorobiev took over from General Vasilyev). "Come in," Vorobyov invites. He

stands at the wide window. Externally has not changed. Still stocky, portly, big-headed. Large facial features keep calm. I report my arrival.

- It seems that you have completely forgotten about your position as assistant chief of staff of the engineering troops! - greeting, notices Vorobyov. - I did the math. During the ten months of the war, you were at the headquarters for exactly one month! -

Comrade General! Operational engineering groups created not according to my desire!

- Don't make excuses! There was no need to deal with partisan problems! Vorobyov offered to sit down and sank into an armchair

himself. "From now on, operational-engineering groups will not be organized," he said. We are striving for the creation of separate special-purpose engineering brigades. They will get busy

exclusively with barriers. You have to take part in the development of brigade states. The desire to change places must be curbed, Comrade Colonel. - I'm listening. - And curb

the hunt for

mining with bumps. How did you manage to pile up these bumps near Rostov? Someone, and even you, must know that the enemy should not even guess where the mines are! - This method has been repeatedly tested on landfills. The

operational-engineering group conducted an additional check ...

- The Main Military Engineering Directorate did not approve such a method, Comrade Colonel, and while I remain the head of the engineering troops, it will not be approved. Keep in mind! - Allow me to explain, comrade general? .. - There is no need to explain anything.

I instructed to stop mining with bumps, we will not return to this issue again. - I'm listening. The conversation turned out to be unpleasant. I changed the subject and reported on the notebook with the mysterious formulas found by foreman Repin on the Krivoy Spit of the Taganrog Bay, took out this notebook and handed it to Vorobyov. Leafing through the notebook, Mikhail Petrovich shook

sloping shoulders:

"Now is not the time for mysteries and mysteries. Hand over the notebook to the office of the authorized GKO for science, let them sort it out. Take a break and get on with your day-to-day duties. I dare not delay! Returning to my room, I hid the folder with documents in the safe, but left the Taganrog notebook on the table. I dialed the phone number of Stepan Afanasyevich Balezin, the representative of the authorized GKO for science. We met Balezin at the beginning of the war. Arriving from the Western Front in Moscow, I turned to the authorized GKO for science, chairman of the Committee for Higher Education, Sergei Vasilyevich Kaftanov, with a request to provide the miners with calculations for the manufacture of shaped charges, recipes and technology for making paste, or, as they began to be called later, plastic explosives with which it was possible to fill containers of any shape. Kaftanov sent to his assistants - S. A. Balezin and K. F. Zhigach. So we met.

Balezin is listening! - was heard in the tube. I said hello
I called myself and said why

I was calling. - Come, I'll be glad to see you! I spent about half an hour at Balezin's. Stepan Afanasyevich was interested in the chemical formulas that filled out the German officer's

notebook: "I'll immediately pass this

on to the scientists!" "Is there really something

important, valuable?" Let's wait for the conclusions of the scientists!

Balezin smiled, evading a direct answer. Why is the OTC needed? I did not take advantage of the offer of the head of the engineering troops to take a break, after talking with Balezin, I went not home, but to one of the alleys behind the Sokol metro station. The Operational and Training Center of the Western Front, the first front-line partisan brainchild, was located there. In the premises of the secondary school occupied by the OEC, Ivan Petrovich Kuteinikov met the same troublesome, affable and not unaccustomed to civil address:

- Ilya Grigorievich! Expensive! Hello! I had good reasons to rush to the CEC. The fate of the center was disturbing. During its existence, it trained and deployed almost four thousand partisans to the enemy rear, made more than twenty thousand different mines and more than twenty-five thousand special hand grenades in workshops. The partisan schools created by the operational training center did even more! But now, by the spring of 1942, "complete calm" reigned here, as Kuteinikov put it in a recent letter. They did not release the extremely necessary funds to the center, all attempts to get walkie-talkies were unsuccessful, and throwing guerrilla saboteurs deep into the enemy rear without the hope of giving them the necessary instructions, obtaining the necessary information, throwing explosives and weapons to them at the indicated places seemed pointless: the forty-first year was a thing of the past, it was necessary to act on the communications of the enemy thoughtfully, according to a plan, fully armed with skill and means of struggle! As I followed Kuteinikov into the office, I noticed the clothes and shoes of the cadets: they were wearing winter uniforms. In the office, Pyotr Ivanovich confirmed that they were not giving out summer. And, lowering his voice, he confidentially said: "There is talk that we

will soon be eliminated altogether, Ilya Grigorievich!" Judge for yourself: guys a long time ago the program

they have passed the training, but they are not sent anywhere, and it seems that they are

not going to dress them. "And I don't allow such a thought!" They cannot liquidate the center! "It doesn't seem to be supposed to... But on the other hand, our states have not yet been approved, even though nine months have passed! Ivan Petrovich looked dejected.

Let's be optimistic! - I said. - The leadership, presumably, had enough trouble without the OTC, but we did not show due perseverance. He encouraged Kuteinikov, but he returned to his still empty apartment, alarmed and worried. He unfolded the map and sat over it for a long time. The front line is still six hundred to a thousand kilometers from the western state border. The occupiers are in charge of the territory, which, according to the most conservative estimates, covers an area of a million square kilometers! But after all, at least a quarter of this area is beyond the control of the fascist troops and the fascist administration, and the enemy's communications, stretched for many hundreds of kilometers, pass through forests and impassable swamps, through partisan territories and regions! for mining and destruction of enemy lines of communication. Even the states of such parts developed. I returned to the idea of creating special units more than once during the war. And since there was not a word or a word from Ponomarenko, I thought that now it is possible to form special units from cadets of the OUC and various partisan schools, from Spanish volunteers, and form quickly, without much difficulty! And the personnel troops will surely provide everything necessary! I found an album with photographs showing the results of the miners' actions in Spain, made some calculations, and the next day went to General Vorobyov. However, the general cooled my ardor. "Don't misunderstand me," said Vorobyov. — I am not opposed to the action of miners behind enemy lines. I am for the most active actions of engineering reconnaissance, for sending miners to enemy communications, for the widespread use of delayed-action mines in the enemy rear! Apparently, it is necessary to include in the operational measures of the

headquarters of the fronts and armies the operations of the engineering troops to destroy the enemy rear. But... He even threw up his hands:

- After all, units of the Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade of Special Purpose are called upon to deal with the disruption of the work of the rear of the enemy! And it is inappropriate for me, the head of the engineering troops, to raise the question of creating special engineering units for the same purpose! Do you agree with this? The idea of OMCBQHa belongs to Pavel Sudoplatov from the NKVD. Omsbonovtsy (guys - eagles, blood and milk! I saw it myself) were supposed to smash the rear units and garrisons of the enemy. Fortunately for them, the brigade was never fully staffed. Separate groups and detachments were thrown behind enemy lines. "However, our mines,

Comrade General, could paralyze enemy transport!" - You don't need to convince me,

you see for yourself! .. Take the album, it may come in handy, and - for the staff of special engineering brigades, Comrade Colonel! Now first of all - these states! Finally descend from the clouds to the earth. I went down to the ground, worked on the staff of special-purpose engineering brigades together with other comrades in the most conscientious way, but I did not leave the idea of creating units to disrupt the operation of enemy lines of communication: after all, the staff of engineering brigades did not provide the necessary means for operations behind enemy lines. And then it dawned on me: the current Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, Chief of Artillery of the Red Army, Nikolai Nikolaevich Voronov, when he was a senior adviser to the Spanish Republican Army, spoke very flatteringly about the miners' units operating in the Francoist rear! Maybe he didn't forget, maybe he keeps the same opinion about the miners ?! I got an appointment with Voronov. Tall, thin, he remained the same as he was in Spain: youthful, emphatically polite and amiable.

- Allow me, Comrade General, to turn on a question that is far from artillery matters. I came for advice.

- Please. I'm listening. I posted the Spanish album again, repeated the same thing that I had said to General Vorobyov.

"Yes, you are right, it is very far from the artillery," Voronov nodded, "It is better to talk to the commander of the airborne troops, General Glazunov.

"Unfortunately, I am not familiar with General Glazunov.

- We'll fix it! Voronov smiled and picked up the phone. - Vasily

Afanasyevich! Hello! - Voronov said, connecting with the commander of the airborne troops. - I now have Colonel Starinov, an acquaintance from Spain. No, not an artilleryman. Miner, saboteur. He has suggestions for you. You will not find time to receive Starinov? .. Yes, I believe he can. Thank you. Voronov lowered the receiver on the levers of the apparatus:

"Glazunov asks you to come in at once. I said you will. Thank you, Comrade Colonel General! - My pleasure. No fluff or feathers for you! And the album, if it's not the only one, please don't take it away. Might be able to show it to someone. "Yes, of course,

leave him alone, Comrade Colonel General! Commander of the Airborne Forces In high spirits, I entered the office of Major General Glazunov. Tall, with dark hair combed on a slanting device, with a face cut with deep wrinkles, the commander of the airborne troops was not alone. He had a man I did not know, also a major general, but shorter and more stout. It turned out that this was the chief of staff of the airborne troops, Major General Spirin, "You see, we have never been assigned tasks of sabotage in the enemy rear," Glazunov remarked thoughtfully. "Our business is to deliver a surprise strike, capture important objects or positions and hold until the main forces arrive. However, knowledge of sabotage equipment and tactics will obviously not hurt our fighters!

"Especially if the unit is thrown out at a great distance from the main forces or gets into a difficult position!" Spirin supported. I was despondent:

- But after all, it was about the creation of special units, and not about individual exceptional, and even sad cases!

"Let's look at things soberly, Comrade Colonel!" Glazunov said in a soothing voice. - We still will not decide on the issue of special battalions or brigades there. It's not our business! But we can do something right now. You have experienced commanders who know how to fight behind enemy lines, we have

paratroopers and aviation. So let's get your commanders to train our fighters! Do you agree? -

I don't mind, but... -

The rest is not in our competence, Comrade Colonel! On the troops so they parted. I sent, of course, a group of minelayer instructors to the airborne troops, but did that solve the problem? What should be done, how to achieve the creation of special units equipped with the latest technology, capable of successfully operating in the deep enemy rear for a long time? The Atomic Notebook Again Busy with these thoughts, I did not attach any importance to Balezin's phone call, thanking him for the Taganrog notebook delivered to him. Was there a notebook with "ersatz" before? Meanwhile, it was Stepan Afanasyevich Balezin's phone call that was a big event, and I should have been glad about it in the first place. True, on the condition that Stepan Afanasyevich would have explained at the same time that the "chemical formulas" in the notebook were schemes for the nuclear transformations of uranium. But for obvious reasons, Balezin did not even mention this. Nor did he mention how Balezin and Kaftanov's schemes for nuclear transformations of uranium alerted him. It was only many years later that I learned that the notes in the notebook obtained by foreman Repin on Krivoy Kos were regarded as evidence of the work that had begun in Nazi Germany on the use of atomic energy for military purposes, especially since Hitler had already threatened humanity with some kind of secret "superweapon", and publications on nuclear research suddenly ceased in the Western scientific press. The latter circumstance was drawn to the attention of the GKO by Lieutenant Flerov, who served in aviation, in the past, a researcher at the Institute of Physics and Chemistry, who, together with Ptzhak, discovered spontaneous fission of uranium nuclei. In Flerov's right opinion, the cessation of publications on nuclear research in the Western scientific press meant that these studies were classified as strictly secret and, consequently, the West began to develop atomic weapons. Balezin and Kaftanov suggested that the fascist officer killed on Krivoy Kos arrived in the southern regions of our country, temporarily captured by the Nazis, not by chance, but to search for uranium. In a word, the notebook I brought to Moscow turned out to be an important document for scientists. (Journal "Chemistry and Life" in issue 3

in 1985 he published excerpts from the memoirs of S. V. Kaftanov. Sergei Vasilyevich writes that this notebook, along with Flerov's warnings, prompted him and Academician A.F. Ioffe to apply to the State Defense Committee with a letter about the need to create a scientific center on the problem of atomic weapons). Here, as they say, there is nothing to add. However, at that time I myself did not even think about atomic energy, as before I was completely absorbed in the idea of creating special forces to fight behind enemy lines, on his communications. Alas, I did not have time to do anything serious in those days, since it was necessary to urgently go to the Kalinin Front and deal with the barriers there. The situation on the Kalinin Front in the spring of 1942 was tense and double-edged: Soviet troops threatened the flanks of the enemy armies, and the enemy troops threatened the flanks of the Soviet ones. Under these conditions, it was not necessary to underestimate the importance of engineering barriers, especially explosive mines.

Chapter 16 Front Commander Konev

Under the hot May sun, the roadside fields were wildly sweeping the grass, the surviving forests were occupied with green flames, and the war-scorched groves stood like widows dressed in black. The headquarters of the engineering troops of the Kalinin Front was located in one of the villages west of the city. We got there by a drying country road. The head of the engineering troops of the front, Colonel V.V. Kosarev, a strong, unhurried man in words and movements, immediately introduced me and Chepak, Ilyushenko and Romanyuk, who arrived with me, to the commissar of the headquarters of the engineering troops, regimental commissar A.K. Popov and the chief of staff, Colonel M.N. Timofeev. He immediately informed about the existing barriers, about the ongoing work, about the needs of the front. We agreed that our small group would visit the armies, inspect the defensive lines, and then we would make a joint decision to strengthen the barriers, primarily mines. The detour and inspection of the defensive lines took more than two days. Returning to the headquarters of the engineering troops of the front, we stopped at the village of Sheino, where the northwestern task force of the Central Committee of the Party of Belarus was located. The leaders of the northwestern group complained that the partisans lacked mines and explosives. I promised to talk about their needs with the command of the Kalinin Front. Having discussed with Kosarev and his assistants the questions of arranging and reinforcing explosive barriers, I conveyed to the chief of the engineering troops of the front the request of comrades from the northwestern group of the Central Committee of the Party of Belarus.

"It will be difficult to help them, but we will definitely do something," said Kosarev. - I promise. - Have you ever thought about the possibilities of the engineering troops themselves to disrupt work. enemy rear? I asked. - No. Do you have experience?

Yes, and significant. I told about the actions of the special battalion on the northern coast of the Taganrog Bay and

asked: - If I turn to the commander of the front with an appropriate proposal, can I count on your support?

- Certainly.

"Why put off the matter indefinitely?" Let's go right now and go to the commander! Kosarev grinned, shook his head, but did not object, and in half an hour we were already at the headquarters of the front, and an hour later the commander of the front, Lieutenant General Ivan Stepanovich Konev, received us. Konev was forty-five years old in forty-two. He was of medium height, a strong, stocky man with a weather-beaten, tanned face and a strong neck tightly wrapped around the collar of his tunic. Shaved head, high forehead with three vertical folds, large nose, light, inquisitive, very attentive eyes. Calm and, one feels, confident in himself. Kosarev introduced me. Konev motioned for a seat. He listened, hesitated, looked at Kosarev: - What is your opinion? Kosarev was cautious: - It's a

new thing. It is possible, apparently, to allocate now for training a company from one hundred and tenth separate motorized engineer. battalion. Konev immediately objected: - For such a case, a

company is not the right unit, Comrade Colonel! Let's pick out the whole battalion! Even though the battalion won't make a difference... He tapped the table with a sharpened pencil:

"If we want strikes against the enemy's lines of communication to be of operational importance, the front will need at least a brigade." Special and best airborne. Noticing the confusion of the head of the engineering troops of the front, Konev grinned:

"Nothing, that's my concern!" And he called the duty officer: - Call Moscow. Vasilevsky. Case from the start was gaining momentum! Konev turned to me:

- Did you yourself, Comrade Colonel, report your idea to the Chief of the General Staff?

"Not at all, Comrade General. Reported only to his chief, General Vorobyov.

- Clear. The authorities were not bypassed, but they stopped halfway. And stopping halfway is contraindicated! That's what. Now I will talk with Alexander Mikhailovich, and when you return to the capital, contact him immediately. Got it? "Understood,

Comrade General!" - Fine. I

don't delay anymore. And, rising, Konev dismissed us with a short nod. I walked out beaming like a birthday boy who had received a long-awaited gift. Kosarev proudly asked:

"Do you see how our commander makes decisions?!" Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky A few days later, having finished my business at the headquarters of the Kalinin Front, I returned to Moscow. The capital met with distressing news: the troops of the Crimean Front, after heavy fighting, left the Kerch Peninsula and evacuated to Taman, the strike groups of the Southwestern Front, which smashed the Kharkov grouping of the enemy, found themselves in an extremely difficult situation as a result of enemy counterattacks. But confident, like most people, that the Red Army would continue its successful offensive in the summer, I was only annoyed at this: the mood remained elated, especially since old dreams about the need to include in the operational activities of the fronts and armies the actions of engineering units behind enemy lines could come true. . To this end, each front must allocate and train an engineer battalion, and each army a sapper company. Nazarov and Vorobyov make minor editorial corrections to the draft, sign the final text and send it to troops, Suddenly Vorobyov inquires what, in fact, I am doing in Moscow. Confused, I look at him. And Vorobyov, pleased that the joke was a success, laughs:

- The order on your appointment as brigade commander has been signed! So go to Konev and take office. Good luck!

Chapter 17

Before leaving Moscow, I submit to the General Staff a plan to disrupt the operation of enemy communications in front of the Western and Kalinin fronts. I drew the attention of the head of the operational department to the fact that the staffing table of the brigade does not provide for operations behind enemy lines. General Bodin, on reflection, allows the use of three battalions of the 5th Engineer Brigade and the 110th Separate Motorized Engineer Battalion to fight behind enemy lines: "At first, it's

enough, but then life will show ... General Vorobyov pays great attention to the brigade: he allows him to select from graduates Nakhbinsky School of Volunteers for Operations behind enemy lines, does not object to my intention to take into the brigade the young commanders who started the war near Kharkov and Rostov, all the instructors and Spaniards who worked with me. There is no end to those who want to go behind enemy lines, graduates of a military school. We select eleven young people, but I take away only two - lieutenants Mikhail Gonchar and Pyotr Andrianov: there is no more room in the emka. I promise to call nine upset young men to the brigade ... Again the Leningrad highway. Again, the white instrument needles tremble on the dashboard of the car, the hands of the driver Volodin, dark from gasoline, grease and the summer sun, confidently lie on the steering wheel, the heated leather of the seats smells sharply, gravel knocks on the bottom from hastily sealed funnels. In the rearview mirror, I see the tanned, flushed young faces of the lieutenants. The eyes of the guys greedily, as if into fate, peer into the road rushing towards them. However, what are these "guys"? Every twenty-first went, at this age I myself had been fighting against Denikin and Wrangel for about two years, I was wounded, and my then knowledge and physical training cannot be compared with the knowledge and training of Goncharov and Andrianov! I like lieutenants. They are from working-class families, Komsomol members, volunteered for the army. Goncharov is serious, thorough;

physical strength. Andrianov impresses with his openness of view, thoroughness of knowledge, rare calmness. In addition, he is a paratrooper and, therefore, a brave man ... Good news was expected at the headquarters of the Kalinin Front: the remaining groups of Captain Kazantsev, senior lieutenants Chepak, Romanyuk and Ilyushenkov managed to train the personnel of the 110th Separate Motorized Engineer Battalion in actions behind enemy lines, transferred behind enemy lines in the sector of the 3rd shock army, the first groups of well-trained saboteurs formed and sent several groups of instructors with a large amount of explosives to partisan detachments and brigades. The groups of Captain Kazantsev alone took with them 1250 kilograms of tola and 120 different engineering mines! In addition, our comrades organized special schools for the training of partisans under the northwestern group of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Belarus and at the headquarters of the Kalinin Front. The mines laid by the groups of P. A. Romanyuk, Lieutenant K. S. Sokolov, G. A. Criulin, well known to the reader Kanel, Francisco Gaspar, Chico Mariano, were the first to explode on enemy communications. Chepak's groups broke out onto the most important highway Smolensk - Vyazma. It was gratifying to realize that commanders trained during the war can successfully work and act in the enemy rear without guardianship, gained confidence and independence! However, along with good news, there were bad ones. It turned out that there were few good engineering mines at the front. The personnel of the construction units, on the basis of which the brigade was to be formed, are not enough, and one cannot count on replenishment from the front reserve. In addition, given the aggravation of the combat situation, without exception, all the engineering units of the front, including the 110th OMIB, were engaged only in mining defensive lines. The battalion commissar Aleksei Ivanovich Bolotin, appointed commissar of the brigade, in the past a senior lecturer in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism at Moscow State University, a participant in the battles near Moscow and the liberation of Kalinin, took my commanding concerns to heart and helped me a lot in those difficult days. With his help, it was possible to quickly establish the production of engineering mines in Kalinin, to agree in the Kalinin Regional Committee of the Party and the Kalinin Regional Committee

Komsomol about sending two hundred and fifty young men and women to the brigade, who expressed a desire to fight behind enemy lines, to prove to the command of the engineering troops of the front that we can already now "send one or two battalions of miners behind enemy lines in order to fulfill the plan for disrupting enemy communications, presented to the operational The transfer and supply of fascist troops, bogged down in a long sack at Rzhev, Zubtsov, Sychevka, Gzhatsk and Vyazma, was then carried out along the only railway line Smolensk - Vyazma and the only highway parallel to this highway. In other words, a developed network of iron and the enemy did not have highways in this area, but used the available ones without special precautions, and disrupting traffic on them, destroying rolling stock in this section - steam locomotives, wagons and platforms, destroying military equipment and manpower of the Nazis during transportation to the front serious importance.

- I give the go-ahead, - said Colonel Kosarev. "However, comrades, the final decision of the question depends on the Military Council of the Front. The three of us went to the front commander, Colonel General I. S. Konev, and a member of the Military Council, Corps Commissar D. S. Leonov: the chief of staff of the engineering troops of the front, Colonel Timofeev, Bolotin and myself. They reported on the progress of work on the installation of minefields in the front line, and there was talk of using units of the 5th engineering brigade to disrupt enemy communications.

"You'll get machine guns, we'll give you five hundred pieces," said Konev. - And as for communication centers and walkie-talkies - do not blame me, there is nothing. There are not enough walkie-talkies even in the units where they are required by the state. Then he continued vigorously:

"Nevertheless, get started!" First, by the forces of the battalion. And gain experience, additional technical means will appear - and we will single out the second battalion. On one condition: to carry out the plans for obstacles in the front line in a timely manner! I assured Konev and Leonov that the plans for minefields would be carried out by the brigade on time. Corps Commissar Leonov inquired about the selection and training of personnel for operations behind enemy lines. Bolotin blushed with excitement:

- The political department and the party organization of the brigade understand the importance and responsibility of the task, comrade corps commissar! We look at people, study them. The Communists were placed at the head of the groups prepared for the

transfer. "That's right," Leonov said with satisfaction. - Well, has the question of people's nutrition been thought out? Please note that the population behind the front line is starving, everything that they had was given to the partisans, it is unacceptable to be freeloaders behind the front line! Bolotin replied that the brigade command was trying to get the lightest, most nutritious and easy-to-carry products in duffel bags in the warehouses.

"Obviously, we should consult with medical workers, develop an optimal diet together with them," the member of the Military Council looked at Konev.

- Right. Moreover, we will not be able to

supply saboteurs by air. Turn to medicine, comrades. Let him give recommendations, but we will provide products, - said the commander, - Well, what else? I can see from their faces that there is something else! I'm taking the Spaniards to me Colonel Timofeev was ahead of me: - Comrade Commander, Colonel

Starinov brought soldiers of the former Republican Army of Spain to the brigade, some of them are officers. "I know," said Konev, "the Military Council,

in my opinion, has already agreed to enlist the Spaniards in the staff of the brigade. Yes, it seems that they also made sorties behind enemy lines?

- Yes sir. They did. We took into account

the consent of the Military Council. - Then what is the problem? -

Now the command of the

brigade is nominating Spanish comrades for a number of command posts and is proposing that they retain the military ranks that they had in the past. Head of engineer troops don't mind. An order from the War Council is required. - Is the list with you? Timofeev handed over to

the commander

prepared list. Konev scanned the paper with his eyes:

- Something is not enough. It was reported that there were much more Spaniards in the brigade.

Timofeev explained: - Colonel Starinov sent part of the Spaniards to partisan squads. Konev looked at me inquiringly, I got up:

— Comrade Commander, they are very much needed there. But there may be more experienced Spanish miners in the brigade, hundreds are asking for the army. However, without knowing your opinion...

- And what can I have an opinion? Take everyone who asks, we will enroll everyone, and according to all the rules! The decision of the Military Council of the Front to intensify strikes against enemy communications, concern for miners raised the morale of the personnel. The Spanish friends were very excited. I well remember how carefully Francisco Gullón screwed the scarlet rectangle to the buttonholes of his tunic, how other Spaniards smiled joyfully and embarrassedly when they first appeared before us in the form of commanders of the Red Army. In those days, the training of the personnel of the brigade in methods of fighting behind enemy lines proceeded at an accelerated pace, but, unfortunately, we were still able to send only separate groups of miners behind enemy lines. It was not possible to use even a single battalion of our brigade and the 110th OMIB to fight behind enemy lines: the front headquarters insistently demanded that the defensive lines be mined. This requirement was dictated by the increasingly complicated situation, and it became quite obvious that it would not be possible to launch a powerful fight against the enemy on his communications, relying on the staff of an ordinary front-line engineering brigade: such a brigade had a lot of work to do. Therefore, on July 1, 1942, Bolotin and I sent a report to the Chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, informing that the plan to disrupt "the work of enemy communications in front of the Kalinin and Western fronts was being frustrated and that the airborne brigade, which I. I quote a few lines from this report: "There are still two or three months left, the most suitable for the mass destruction of trains and cars, which, of course, can pin down the enemy in a number of sectors, disrupt his operational and supply transportation. For the first time, only one airborne brigade is needed. The latter can be formed on the basis of the 110th OMIB and two battalions of the 5th engineering brigade. "The report has been sent. It remains to wait for an answer. In the meantime, everyday life. We mine, deal with people, travel along the entire front, and visit the North Western. Two meetings of those days were retained in my memory. Once, having arrived at the headquarters of the North-Western Front,

front commander Lieutenant General P. A. Kurochkin. At the beginning of the war, Pavel Alekseevich commanded the 20th Army, in the zone of which I had the opportunity to work and for the first time send miners behind enemy lines. The front commander recognized me, became interested in the experience of the actions of demolition workers on enemy communications routes. As a result of the meeting, a school of demolitionists emerged in Valdai. At Kurochkin's request, we sent several instructors there, and they did a good job in Valdai. Railroad saboteurs Another meeting took place at the railroad bed with the commander of the 6th railway brigade, Colonel D. A. Teryukhov. In 1924 we graduated from the same school of military communications. Now Teryukhov was checking the work of his subordinates, I drove by, recognized him by his tall height and, of course, stopped the car. Embraced.

- What are you doing here? Teryukhov asked. - Break something again?
I explained what I was doing on the Kalinin front. "By the way,"

he asked, "could you single out at least one company for operations behind enemy lines? Teryukhov chuckled.

- Roth! Do you know what kind of people I have here? They filled up with reports, they are eager to beat the Nazis. But after all, someone needs to poke around with sleepers. I agreed with. this. And Teryukhov suddenly took the belt:

"Listen... Is it true that your people go there?" He nodded towards the front line.
- They go. There are still

several groups active there. Teryukhov looked into my eyes, deciding on something, and suddenly said: "Ah, burn everything with fire!" I will

select a company! Honestly! After all, who is under my command? Railway Specialists! They don't need to explain anything, they know better than others where and what to undermine! Only - churn! No one knows about this, understand? "I give you my word that everything will

remain between us and the Military Council of the Front. - All! Send instructors!
We sent

three instructors, led by F. P. Ilyushenkov, to the 6th railway brigade. For their arrival, Colonel Teryukhov created a company of volunteers under the command of Captain P.I. Okolo-Kulak. The company consisted of one hundred fighters and junior commanders. It was really not difficult to train them. Already in July, several sections of the company, accompanied by instructors, made the first exits to the rear.

enemy. Then the company began to act independently. Subsequently, having learned about the successful actions of the fighters of Captain Okolo-Kulak, Teryukhov's superiors, to his annoyance and chagrin, withdrew the company from the 6th railway brigade. Only after the war did we learn that the division of the brave captain had been operating in the deep rear of the Nazis for a long time, successfully and without loss of personnel.

Chapter 18 Battles for the Rzhev salient

The first person I saw at the headquarters of the Inzhstroy Front, returning on the afternoon of July 2 from a trip to the 1st Shock Army, was the bewildered Colonel

Timofeev. Are you already informed? he inquired.

- About

what? - So, you don't know ... Well, my friend, it was not in vain that we were in a hurry with mining! The Nazis deal a strong blow to Maslennikov. The news was alarming. Lieutenant General Ivan Ivanovich Maslennikov commanded the 39th Army, which hung from the north over the Smolensk railway. -

Vyazma, and from the east - over the road Vyazma - Rzhev. The army penetrated deeply into the enemy defenses, occupying a ledge with an area of over four thousand square kilometers. However, the "corridor" connecting the 39th Army with the main forces of the front was relatively narrow, remained the most vulnerable section of our defense, and was a subject of constant concern to the army command and the Military Council of the front. Naturally, I thought that the enemy had struck under the base of the ledge occupied by the 39th Army, trying to cut its communications. Timofeev confirmed that this is the case. On the same day, instructing the 5th brigade to concentrate its efforts on mining the defensive lines of the front, Colonel Kosarev gloomily noted that a blow to Maslennikov's army, given its strength, could be the beginning of a new attempt by the Wehrmacht to break through to Moscow. He said out loud what was on the minds of many. Unfortunately, the Kalinin Front did not have sufficient forces to restore the "corridor" cut by the enemy to the 39th Army. The commander of the army in the first days of the fighting was wounded and evacuated to the rear. His absence exacerbated the plight of the encircled units and formations. Nevertheless, they courageously fought the enemy, breaking through to the main forces of the front. Thoughts about the possibility of a transition to partisan actions among

there were no corps and division commanders of the 30th Army at that time. The commander of one of the rifle corps even stopped the intention of T.P. Chepak, who was with a group of miners at his disposal, to remain behind enemy lines and act on the communications of the Nazis. Chepak was ordered to break through to his own, along with rifle units. The miners suffered completely unnecessary, unjustified losses. I had to ask the front commander through Colonel Kosarev to instruct the formation commanders not to continue to use saboteurs as shooters, even in critical situations. In those days, sultry and anxious, heavily mining the front lines, we learned about the creation of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement and the front headquarters of the partisan movement. At the same time, an order was received to build near the front line, in "areas where the enemy's offensive seemed most likely, secret warehouses of mine-explosive equipment. It was assumed that in the event of a temporary withdrawal of our troops, partisans would use them. To give an idea of the scale of this work, I will say that only "The 166th battalion of engineer obstacles laid forty-six warehouses. Then we helped the headquarters of the partisan movement of the Kalinin Front, allocating explosives and mines to its representatives. From the first days of June, 73 groups of miners went behind enemy lines. Having completed their tasks, they returned to the brigade, almost no The successful actions of these separate, technically poorly equipped groups convinced us that if we sent regular units of special troops behind enemy lines capable of carrying out massive operations planned from one center on enemy communications, the result would be incommensurable with the received. , acting together with the partisans, could completely disrupt the delivery of reinforcements, equipment, ammunition and fuel to the enemy armies. Perhaps the hit of the Nazis on Maslennikov would not have succeeded! We talked a lot on this subject with Bolotin, figuring out how best to act while there are no special troops, and painfully pondering how to achieve their creation. As a result of reflection, they came to the conclusion: we must write to I.V. Stalin! No one, except the People's Commissar of Defense, the Chairman of the State Defense Committee, will solve the issue of creating special troops for strikes against enemy lines of communication!

WITH

First of all, Colonel Kosarev, Regimental Commissar Popov, and Colonel Timofeev were introduced to the draft letter. "It

is inappropriate to send a letter without the knowledge of the commander," Kosarev remarked. The front commander worked extremely hard in those July days. The Rzhev-Sychevsk offensive operation was being prepared, which was to be jointly carried out by the troops of the left wing of the Kalininsky and the troops of the right wing of the Western Front. They were to defeat the main forces of the enemy 9th Army and liquidate the so-called "Rzhev salient". Konev had a huge responsibility. Nevertheless, he found time to familiarize himself with the draft letter addressed to I. V. Stalin. front commander said that he agreed with the main provisions of the letter and the conclusions we had drawn, that he shared the idea of creating special troops to disable enemy communications and would send a letter to I.V. Stalin. -

And you go after the letter! he added unexpectedly. - Let the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Red Army join the cause! Voroshilov, Kalinin, Malenkov ... With a copy of the letter addressed to I.V. Stalin, we came to the chief of staff of the engineering troops, General K.S. Nazarov, since General Vorobyov was absent at that time. He went, if memory serves, to the Bryansk Front. Nazarov approved of our idea. Did you call the Central Committee?

he inquired. - Did you receive a letter? — Received. - Fine.

While it will

be studied and consulted, enlist the support of competent persons. Say, General Glazunov. We followed the advice of the chief of staff of the engineering troops of the Red Army and went to the commander of the airborne troops. He received us without delay, agreed that the airborne troops, of course, were the most prepared for conducting sabotage operations behind enemy lines, but immediately reported that the airborne units with which the minelayer instructors worked had been sent to the Southern Front and joined the rifle formations fighting in the interfluvium of the Don and Volga.

"The time is cruel, there are no prospects for the actions of paratroopers on enemy communications now," Glazunov finished sympathetically. We left his office confused. If

paratroopers are used as infantry, then the situation is certainly extremely serious, difficult, and the consideration of our letter cannot be postponed: it is strikes against enemy communications that can alleviate the situation of the Soviet troops! I called the expedition of the Central Committee of the party. They replied that the letter had been handed over to Voroshilov. I called Voroshilov's office. The assistant replied that the letter had been received and was with Klementy Efremovich. I call the next day. Another voice answers, but the answer is the same. Bolotin and I are nervous: the brigade was left without a commander and commissar, more and more fierce battles are unfolding at the front, and we are inactive! Finally, Voroshilov himself picked up the phone. I introduced myself, asked to receive Bolotin and me. Voroshilov appointed an hour for the meeting. Reassured, excited, we came to the Kremlin. Voroshilov was not alone: Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin was sitting at the high window of his office, slightly stooping, stroking his beard. The presence of Mikhail Ivanovich, the oldest member of the party, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the party, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, could only mean one thing: he was in the know. It was

encouraging, but also a lot of obligation. "I've read the report," began Voroshilov, pointing us to the chairs. - I agree that the creation of special units for operations on enemy communications is an important and urgent task. Comrade Kalinin is of the same

opinion. So, Mikhail Ivanovich? "It's worth it," Kalinin supported quietly. "Moreover, the population behind enemy lines will be delighted to meet with regular units of the Red Army and will help them. A conversation began that lasted about

an hour. We must send comrades to the Central Committee. Nothing can be decided without the Central Committee, Klementy Efremovich, Kalinin advised at the end of the conversation. The marshal immediately called the reception of G. M. Malenkov, secretary of the Central Committee of the party, member of the State Defense Committee, and agreed that he would receive Bolotin and me. Forty minutes later we were at Malenkov's. Replying with a nod to our greeting, he took a letter addressed to I. V. Stalin, read it, said that he approved the idea, offered to come to him the next day by 11 o'clock in the afternoon, together with the head of the engineering troops of the Red Army, having in his hands a draft decision.

communications. Since General Vorobyov was still absent, we arrived with General Nazarov. Having reviewed the draft decision of the State Defense Committee proposed by us, Malenkov called the Chief of the General Staff of the AM Vasilevsky: -

Alexander Mikhailovich, representatives of the engineering troops will come to you now, issue an order from the NPO to create special brigades for operations on enemy communications. Vasilevsky answered something.

- The issue is resolved, - Malenkov answered and hung up. "Go to the General Staff, comrades. I wish you success. An hour later, Bolotov and I (General Nazarov, referring to being busy, left for the headquarters of the engineer troops) were received by Lieutenant General Vasilevsky. Accepted, I will not hide, it's cold. Perhaps our arrival was not on time, or perhaps the chief of the General Staff was tired or upset about something: in the summer of 1942, all military leaders had enough reasons to worry. The conversation was extremely short and formal. Vasilevsky, looked at the draft decision, said dryly:

- Tell Colonel General Konev that the General Staff will prepare an order from the People's Commissar of Defense on the creation of special engineering troops. You are free. The cold reception of the Chief of the General Staff could not dampen our joy. Georgy Dimitrov Before returning to the Kalinin Front, Bolotov and I wanted to resolve one more issue: the question of enlisting former soldiers of the Republican army of Spain and other Spanish comrades who were eager to beat the fascist pack into the brigade. Most of these people were members of the Spanish Communist Party, so the issue of their participation in hostilities should be decided by the leadership of the CPI. However, the leadership of the KPI was then not in Moscow, and Bolotov and I turned to the Spanish section of the Comintern. They were received very cordially there, they listened attentively, but they answered that in order to finally resolve the issue, it was necessary to talk to the General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Comrade Dimitrov. We mixed up. Disturb on a rather simple question such an outstanding figure in the international workers' and communist movement? Is it appropriate?

"Quite appropriate," they assured us. "Wait, we'll agree when Comrade Dimitrov will receive you." Dimitrov received us through

some fifteen minutes. Before they had time to open the massive door of the office, he got up from behind the desk and went to meet her heroic growth, an athletically built man with huge silvery hair and jet-black mustaches. Dimitrov in the forty-second year turned sixty years old. Age and a difficult, full of struggle life, being in fascist dungeons left traces on his courageous face, the features of which seemed sharp and stern. Only large dark eyes looked friendly and reassuring. "Come on, come on, comrades!" - Dimitrov suggested with characteristic Bulgarian intonations in a thick

voice. - As they say in my homeland, good came!. They settled down at the desk. I told about the purpose of coming.

— I know, the Spanish comrades said. We'll give you reinforcements! Dimitrov replied. "All peoples must beat the fascist reptile!" But I was also told that you have extensive experience in guerrilla operations. This is true?

- I had to train border guards, go to the rear Francoist troops, to train miners and partisans in this war.

- Tell me, can the fighters of the Resistance forces in the occupied countries of Europe learn anything from your experience? Let's say the French communists? The poppies are waging a courageous fight against the Nazis! "I

suppose our experience wouldn't hurt, Comrade Dimitrov. -

Please explain what exactly should be used from your experience? I spoke for quite a long time, in detail, even drew diagrams, and Dimitrov listened very attentively. When I finished, I asked a lot of questions. He was interested in literally everything: how the miners cross the front line, how they move around the occupied territory, how they mine the enemy's communication lines. They talked for about two hours. Strongly shaking our hands in parting, Dimitrov said that he was pleased with the meeting, thanks for the story. - Thank you for the warm welcome, Comrade Dimitrov! Soon the

brigade received a replenishment: one hundred Spanish comrades. They immediately began preparations for operations behind enemy lines.

Chapter 19

Colonel-General Konev was satisfied with the results of our trip to Moscow, at the headquarters of the Inzhstroy Front we were congratulated on our success, the soldiers and commanders of the 5th Inzhbrigade, confident that they would be included in the special forces first, went on birthdays. Bolotin and I also believed that in the near future, the 5th engineering brigade will receive a new status, and with it new staffs, new weapons and, most importantly, such necessary radio communications! So far, everything went on as before: most of the units mined the front lines, only separate groups went behind enemy lines. And when on July 23 the Soviet Information Bureau reported that the unit, where Comrade Starinov was commander, derailed ten enemy trains, we regarded this not only as recognition of the merits of the miners, but first of all as evidence that the creation of special forces was not far off! I do not want the reader to get the impression that only the command of the Kalinin Front, me and my close comrades were worried about the disruption of enemy communications, the destruction of the enemy rear and the creation of specially trained units for this. The reader remembers, of course, the names of General Nevsky and military engineer 2nd rank Yastrebov, the organizer and participant in the mass mining in Kharkov. In the summer of 1942 they were on the Karelian front. Yastrebov responded to my letter and said that in a separate special-purpose engineering brigade, where he is deputy commander, hundreds of miners were being trained to operate behind enemy lines. After the war, I learned that both on the Western and Southern fronts, by the summer of the forty-second year, the miners of some engineering brigades, the miners of the sapper and engineer battalions of the armies, as well as the miners of the sapper battalions of rifle divisions, repeatedly went to the enemy rear, destroying enemy communication lines, road structures, destroying the manpower and equipment of the enemy. It must be assumed that their combat activity spoke for itself, and Nevsky, Yastrebov and other commanders of the engineering troops also turned to

high command with proposals to intensify attacks on enemy communications. In a word, the idea of creating special troops to destroy enemy manpower and equipment during transportation to the front was in the air. And the events on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, where the Red Army, with bloody battles, inflicting counterattacks, was forced to retreat to Stalingrad, Rostov and the foothills of the Caucasus from July 17, confirmed: it is unacceptable to hesitate with strikes against the stretched enemy communications! And then I was urgently summoned to Moscow, to the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, the head of the Main Directorate of Formations, E. I. Shchadenko. I invited A.I. Bolotin to go with me: did they start the business together, and bring it to the end together? - You?! - General Nazarov was surprised

when he saw me on the threshold of his office, - Mikhail Petrovich did not call you, in my opinion. - They called to the Deputy People's Commissar,

Comrade General, but I thought you know why. - I

have no idea. Maybe Mikhail Petrovich? .. But Lieutenant General Vorobyov had no idea about the reason for my call.

"Obviously, something was decided with the special forces," he surmised. It happened late in the evening, I found it inconvenient to come to the deputy people's commissar for the night, I hurried to Shchadenko the next morning. The Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement The streets of Moscow, despite the fine day, were strikingly sparsely populated, but in the 2nd building of the NPO, in its courtyards, corridors, there were many people. Army commissar 1st rank Shchadenko, of medium height, stout, no longer young, with a puffy face, after listening to the performance, pointed to a chair by the desk:

- Sit down. How was the ride? - Thank you. Well, comrade army commissar of the first rank! Do you know why you were invited? - No.
"The

People's Commissariat is sending you to a new job—to the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, Comrade Colonel. Noticing my confusion, Shchadenko added encouragingly:

"The work is big and important. Get your order today report to Comrade Ponomarenko. He smiled and it dawned on me:

"Understood, comrade army commissar of the first rank! Special forces will be formed by the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement!

Shchadenko's wide eyebrows took the form of triangles:

What special forces? -

For mining and destruction of enemy communications! We looked at each other: I, beaming with a smile, Shchadenko, wrinkling my forehead and as if seeing me for the first time. Then the deputy commissar shook shoulders:

- I don't understand. Ponomarenko does not form any special forces and is not going to form them. Someone misinformed you, Comrade Colonel. There is already enough work at the Central Headquarters. See for yourself!

Apparently, the deputy people's commissar said whatever he wanted, because he lowered his eyes, moved his notebook and pressed the button, calling for an assistant. I continued to stand without asking permission to leave. The doors behind me opened, the assistant to the deputy people's commissar came in, but I still couldn't find the right words. What he heard did not fit in his head. Is it about to create the special units for which we so advocated, our brigade will be transformed, and I myself, it turns out, will be removed from the case? — Comrade army

commissar of the first rank, "The brigade I command has just been formed and has begun to operate behind enemy lines..." I heard my own voice sink in. Shchadenko raised his head. let him act!" said Shchadenko. "Now you have

other work. What is still not clear?

- I did not hand over the brigade, Comrade Army Commissar of the First Rank! Let me stay in it! Only in very great distress can one speak in this way with a senior in position and rank. But I was in complete despair! How is it to "stay"? What does "didn't give up" mean? - in

pauses, Shchadenko asked distinctly. My brigade is special. It has a . With lot of Spaniards. I

sought ... - I confusedly explained the situation. Shchadenko grew gloomy.

- You have to work where they put you! - He raised his voice, - Where they put, and not where we would like! The issue of your transfer has been resolved, we will not revise it. And looked over my shoulder at assistant:

"Prepare an order for Comrade Starinov!" The doors creaked, the assistant got out. Shchadenko shaking his head: - He is entrusted with a

big party business, and he - "stay"! And think about the Spanish comrades; If you need it - come on in. Half an hour later I went down to the lobby, where Bolotin was waiting. Alexey Ivanovich immediately guessed: something unforeseen and distressing had happened. Upon learning the news, wilted:

- And the brigade? What about the special forces? - What can I answer, Alexei Ivanovich? Apparently, there is some urgent work at the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement. I don't know anything else. That day we said goodbye to Bolotin for a long time. Our connection has not been interrupted. They wrote to each other, shared thoughts and news that could be entrusted to the field mail, consulted on a variety of issues, but the joy of common work and everyday friendly communication disappeared. What can you do? Until the end of the war, our * * * I did not return to the 5th engineering road and did not agree. of special forces to disrupt the brigade, I no longer had to deal with the organization work of the enemy's rear, but I have no right to cut off the story about the brigade, about its people, leaving the reader at a loss as to how events unfolded in the future, even in my absence. To begin with, the idea of \u200b\u200bcreating special units to disrupt the rear of opponents was partially realized: on August 17, 1942, by order of the People's Commissar of Defense in the Red Army, Separate Guards battalions of miners were created, as well as a Separate Guards Brigade of miners at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command "for mining and destruction communications behind enemy lines. On the Kalinin front, the 10th separate guards battalion of miners was formed. From the composition of the 5th engineering brigade, an insignificant part of the fighters and an officer got into the guards battalion, but the 160th and 166th battalions of the 5th brigade continued to operate behind enemy lines. They showed particular activity in the period from April to August 1943, when he was appointed chief of staff of the engineering troops of the front.

Colonel A. A. Vinsky - the same Vinsky with whom our operational-engineering group departed from Kharkov in the autumn of the forty-first year. At the end of May 1943, the front commander even came to the 160th battalion to talk with miners, drew the attention of the brigade command to the need to strain all forces to strike at enemy communications, demanded that operations be clearly planned, linking them with the operations of the 10th Separate Guards battalion of miners. Colonel Vinsky agreed with the command of the air army attached to the front, organized the training of miners in parachute jumps, and in July 43, not separate groups, but companies of miners were airlifted behind enemy lines on the Kalinin Front. Bravely, boldly, and successfully operated behind enemy lines, privates, sergeants, foremen and officers brought up in the 5th engineering brigade acted successfully. Seven of them were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union: Guards Senior Lieutenant N. V. Kolosov, Senior Sergeant V. P. Goryachev, Sergeant D. M. Yablochkin, Junior Sergeant V. B. Efimov, Private I. K. Bazalev, F. I. Bezrukov and M. V. Myagky. Hundreds of miners were awarded combat awards and medals. Among them are my Spanish friends. And what about the young lieutenants Goncharov and Andrianov, whom I brought from Nakhabin? Their fighting fate became bright. More than once they were transferred to the enemy rear, they undermined the fascist trains and cars of the group commanded by Mikhail Goncharov. At the end of the forty-third, Goncharov became a captain, had several high military awards. He finished the war as a major, studied at the Military Engineering Academy named after V. V. Kuibyshev, and with the rank of colonel taught for many years at the academy at the mine blasting department. Pyotr Andrianov became famous among the miners of the front for his ability to boldly mine enemy railways in broad daylight. Distinguished by amazing composure, prudence and resourcefulness, Andrianov managed to lay mines with his own hands literally in front of the approaching enemy echelon. He was also known for leading Soviet people out of the enemy rear. At the end of August 1943, he brought out no less than six hundred people, among them women with children. In September, the forty-third Andrianov detachment, numbering twenty-five people, intercepted and captured eighty-eight enemy

saboteurs disguised as soldiers of the Red Army and armed to the teeth. At that time, Andrianov, who was awarded military orders, already had the rank of captain. When performing one of the combat missions, Pyotr Andrianov got a cold in his legs and fell seriously ill. He was offered to go to staff work, but the young officer insisted on returning to his soldiers, continued to make military campaigns. In June 1944, the division of Captain Andrianov and a group of partisans were surrounded by large forces of Nazi punishers. The fight lasted all day. In the evening, Andrianov led people to a breakthrough, cleared the way for his comrades with grenades, and he himself fell, hit by an enemy bullet ... If the reader of these lines visits the Volga, he can see a handsome ship, on the high side of which the golden letters "Pyotr Andrianov" shine. The motherland immortalized the memory of the young officer-miner.

Chapter 20

From the People's Commissariat of Defense to the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (TSSHPD) it was a stone's throw, but I changed my mind a lot along this path. The significance of the Central Headquarters is clear: the centralization of the leadership of the partisan movement is extremely necessary, and the creation of the Central Staff is an event of extreme importance! It is only incomprehensible why it was necessary to recall me from the front and send me to the TsSHPD? True, I wrote several times to P.K. Ponomarenko, who was appointed head of the TsShPD, suggesting that brigades be created to disrupt the work of the enemy rear. Maybe these letters? .. The central headquarters of the partisan movement worked in a spacious old building with a mezzanine and false columns in the courtyard of the mansion, which now houses the Museum of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The courtyard was densely furnished with former stables and woodsheds adapted for a garage and the security room. Having shown the documents on duty, I went up the stairs with a carpeted path to the second floor. Everything sparkled: the polished parquet, the copper of the well-polished door handles, the fresh paint of the baseboards and walls. Adjutant Ponomarenko, reporting about me, lingered in the office of the chief of staff for minutes. At last he appeared and invited me in. Ponomarenko was sitting at a large polished table in a brand new, brand-new tunic, tightly fitting his heavy figure. index finger:

“You see, I’m looking through your personal file and I can’t decide who to appoint you to! How did you react to these words? Recalling me from the front, of course, they should have determined in advance the type of my activity, but maybe they changed their mind at the last moment or there are several vacancies in the headquarters? I thought I could help Ponomarenko: - Panteleimon Kondratievich, as far as I know, in the rear

there is no enemy partisan headquarters yet.

- Yes. No. -

So, perhaps, to create such a headquarters behind enemy lines in the Western direction, in one of the partisan regions? At first, you can throw in the rear of the Nazis the task force of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement.

- No. It is one thing to have operational-engineering groups at the front, and another to lead a guerrilla war behind enemy lines. There, the movement is led by party organs, and we must not replace them. — I didn't mean the political leadership, Panteleimon Kondratievich! The operational group of the headquarters would be engaged in the training of specialists in sabotage work, planning and coordinating the actions of partisan brigades and detachments.

"No, comrade Starinov, we don't need any

operational groups and additional headquarters behind enemy lines!"

Ponomarenko said firmly. - Absolutely not needed! - Then you can form a sabotage brigade. I can prepare her and fly

with her behind enemy lines in two or three weeks! Ponomarenko shook his head again: - Not that. Do you really think that I sought your transfer to the Central Headquarters in order to immediately send

you behind the front line? I think it is necessary to organize something like a partisan academy. Let's say more modestly - the highest partisan school. In addition, the headquarters needs the head of the technical department. Here's what I think is the best place for you. And one more thing: is it possible to combine these two positions - the head of the technical department and the head of the higher school, and not to appoint you to such a position?

- It's not for me to decide, Panteleimon Kondratievich. -

You will be able to establish the production of various mines, you have a lot of experience in training saboteurs ... Ponomarenko called the head of the personnel department of the headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Timoshenko:

- Take care of the design of Comrade Starinov. He will head our technical department and the partisan school at the headquarters. Think over the structure of the school together, and Comrade Starinov will select the personnel for it himself. He knows people and knows where to turn. Leaning his palms on the table, Ponomarenko got up and straightened up: "That's all for today,

Comrade Starinov." Get down to business. ** By the time I arrived at the Central Headquarters of the Partisan

movement there, work was already underway to identify and account for all partisan detachments, to establish radio communications with them, efforts were made to supply the partisans with explosives, weapons and medicines, to organize the treatment and evacuation of the seriously wounded and sick to the Soviet rear. The general leadership of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (TSSHDPD) was carried out from the GKO by K. E. Voroshilov. By the way, when discussing the question of the name of the headquarters in the State Defense Committee, Voroshilov proposed calling it, as it was under Lenin, the Main Headquarters of partisan detachments or partisan forces. However, a different point of view prevailed. An old acquaintance, a comrade in battles in Spain, Khadzhi Dzhiorovich Mamsurov, told me about this. I met him, still slender, swarthy, handsome, in the headquarters corridor. It turned out that Colonel Mamsurov heads the local intelligence

- I believe that Klementy Efremovich's proposal was more correct!

Mamsurov

remarked categorically. - Headquarters is an organ for planning and developing operations conceived by the commander. But can there be a commander of the "movement"? Can not. Here is the Commander-in-Chief of the partisan forces - maybe! Okay, more on that later. There will be more time! Mamsurov had a huge responsibility for the correctness of information about the enemy coming from the TsShPD. Information from the partisans - albeit fragmentary and irregular - was received, but any intelligence information requires re-checking and confirmation, and "timely". To receive verified, confirmed data in the then state of communication was extremely difficult. No easier "than Mamsurov, it was also for other employees of the headquarters. For example, it was possible to supply partisans with explosives, mine equipment, weapons and ammunition only if there was a stable radio communication inaccessible to the enemy. But what could the head of the communications department of the headquarters, Colonel Ivan Nikolayevich Artemyev, although he was a major "specialist in radio engineering, do if only a sixth of the partisan detachments and formations registered by the headquarters had reliable radios?! Slow, restrained, Ivan Nikolayevich listened to the claims of Mamsurov and the chief operational department of Colonel Vasily Fedorovich Sokolov, not

showing his feelings, only turned pink. And then he quietly advised his interlocutors to contact the State Defense Committee, or even better - directly to the Commander-in-Chief, so that they would be given a sufficient number of "walkie-talkies", and at the same time - aircraft for flying behind enemy lines ... At that time, much had not yet been finally decided: departments headquarters were just being staffed, the duties of some employees were still being clarified, the forms of contacts with the General Staff, with the headquarters of various branches of the military were just beginning to be established. partisan detachments and formations, the most effective methods of waging a partisan war did not yet exist in it. what was demanded from the 5th brigade by former employees of the OUC and Spanish comrades. The head of the engineering troops of the Kalinin Front, Colonel Kosarev, was initially angry, but then he entered into my position and satisfied the demand. True, the veterans of the partisan struggle did not express joy at the recall * * to Moscow. Then I sent a letter to the commander of the airborne troops, General Glazunov, asking him to send thirty paratroopers to the school. Soon they arrived: young, tall, physically strong. The Higher Military-Political Institute also responded to our request and sent graduates. They were also young, in brand new tunics with creaking sword belts, no, no, and yes, they looked at the golden stars sewn on their sleeves and at the scarlet cubes pinned to their buttonholes. Many of these political workers had experience in party and Soviet work, good military training, but only Fadeev read about guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines. I will mention their names more than once on the pages of this book. In a special category of the school's personnel belonged the mine-blasting instructors familiar to the reader, who once worked in the OTC, then in Kharkov, Rostov and on the Kalinin Front: Maria Stepanovna Belova, Captain Semyon Petrovich Mineev, Captain Vladimir Pavlovich Chepiga and several other comrades. Teaching mine demolition at VOSCHON. they themselves studied, mastering tactics

actions behind enemy lines. And, of course, the veteran saboteurs Campillo, Lorente, Konizares, Sanchez Coronado, Viesque, Fusimanya, Francisco Gullon, Angel Alberca, Benito Ustarres, Joaquin Gomez improved their knowledge, shared their experience with newcomers. I ordered that administrative and economic workers of the school be involved in the training: at least let them know who, what and for what purposes they should provide. It was Captain A.S. Egorov, the head of the financial department of VOSCHON, who forced the order to give such an order. Secretly, I hoped that Yegorov would get carried away with the mine-exploding business and become softer. Alas, this "sabotage" of mine was not successful: the chief financial officer thoroughly studied mine blasting and tactics behind enemy lines, and just a year later he became deputy for sabotage at the Hero of the Soviet Union A. f. Fedorov, but he never made any concessions to me and my assistants while he was the head of the school. Among the staff of the school there were other comrades who became enthusiasts of mine-blasting, who boldly fought behind enemy lines. Among them is the head of the medical unit of the school, B. N. Kazakov. The question of an interpreter for classes with Spanish cadets was simply resolved: I called my wife and children from the evacuation, and Anna, who was familiar to the Spaniards from sorties near Jaen and Grenada, who herself knows the mine-exploding business well and is fluent in Spanish, again became my faithful assistant.

Chapter 21

Sultry, stuffy August forty-two. Levitan's voice is gloomy: on the Southwestern and Southern fronts, our troops are leaving city after city. It is in these formidable, tragic days that many pressing issues of the partisan movement are being resolved. In the leading article "Partisans, hit the enemy harder!", published on August 13, Pravda calls for the destruction of enemy manpower and equipment, primarily during rail transport: "Glorious partisans and partisans! Beat the enemy, destroy his weapons and equipment on the way, on its communications, on the way to the front, in the deep enemy rear!" Tests, exercises ... Just on August 13, we begin testing various methods of sabotage on the railways. We undermine conventional charges and the so-called "cumulative" - cone-shaped, directional. We make crashes with the help of various mines, check the effectiveness of incendiary devices, shelling locomotives and tanks with rifles, machine guns and anti-tank rifles, looking for the most rational ways to place anti-train mines, allowing us to achieve results with the least expenditure of explosives: after all, for partisans, every thick checker was worth its weight in gold! After listening to a report on the test results, Ponomarenko asks if it is possible to organize a demonstration of mine-explosive equipment for a group of partisans who arrived at the headquarters for a short time. I answer that I will agree with the head of military communications of the Red Army I.V. Kovalev, I will ask you to provide us with a railway test ring. We are allowed to use the test ring, set a date - August 18th. "Sabotage groups" arrived at the scene close to midnight. Darkness stands - if the eye! The cautious steps of the "patrols" guarding the railway tracks are heard. The "patrols" include partisans, who will be shown equipment. These people are attentive, cautious, but the "saboteurs" are not born with a bast. Morning. "Patrols" and "saboteurs" gathered together. Ponomarenko and staff members arrive. We offer them and the partisans

look at the paths. The examiners look incredulously at the railway track, the ballast stones smeared with fuel oil, sleepers, even threads of rails, carefully take their first steps. Three partisans, before taking a step, try the ballast with probes: they understand that they could have been prepared for a surprise. Alas, soon there is a bang and smoke appears: the first "mine", designed to destroy the "tentacle", exploded. And here is the second, and the third ... No one was able to find at least one mine and neutralize it. Then "a train was launched around the ring. And it began! Flash, smoke, flash, smoke, flash, smoke! The train went in the opposite direction - again" explosions "!" leaders in the advantage of some mines, completely invisible to train drivers and requiring only 10-20 seconds to install, as well as in the advantages of delayed-action mines, which work reliably even when installed in ballast, out of contact with the rails and sleepers of the railway track. collect mines from parts that the partisans could mine or make on their own. The "dessert" was the non-recoverable mines shown by S. V. Gridnev. Unfortunately, we could not promise that these mines would soon go to the partisan detachments ... Problems, problems ... Every evening After finishing school or testing at the training ground, I returned to the TsSHPD, where I stayed until late at night. Work was underway on various documents, and among them the most important - the draft order of the People's Commissar of Defense "On the tasks of the partisan movement." The need to issue such an order was dictated, in particular, by the lack of a consensus on the capabilities of the partisans, on the tactics of the partisan armed forces, on the methods of fighting the enemy in his rear, on the need for operational leadership of the partisans and their material support from the Soviet rear. Some military leaders, for example, Mekhlis, found that the partisans did not and could not have any special strategy and tactics; attack the enemy at the right moment and immediately hide, and the proposal to supply the partisans with weapons and explosives was called harmful chatter: they say, this will give rise to a dependent mood among them, will allow them to evade combat contact with the enemy!

- The partisans have already sat up in the forests and swamps! — said the defenders of this point of view. - Let them climb out, let them attack the Nazis, arm and supply at their expense, and not beg at the party and Soviet threshold! However, life itself convinced: partisan detachments are growing faster and are more active precisely where they are provided with constant assistance from the Soviet rear. In Belarus, for example, Vitebsk partisans received such assistance. From March to September of the forty-second year, they were transported more than eleven thousand rifles, six thousand machine guns, a thousand machine guns, five hundred anti-tank rifles, a large amount of ammunition, grenades and explosives [History of the Great Patriotic War in 6 tons of volumes - M.: Voenizdat, 1961. T. 2. S. 478.]. And what? By the beginning of the forty-third year, the number of Vitebsk partisans was almost half the number of all Belarusian partisans, although the Vitebsk region occupies only a tenth of the territory of the USSR! Voroshilov sharply opposed the views of Mekhlis and others who were little versed in matters of the partisan movement of people. Therefore, the draft order, in particular, clearly defined the main strategic task of the partisans - the destruction of enemy manpower and equipment on their way to the front by rail. In late August - early September, the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, on behalf of the Central Committee of the party, held a meeting of representatives of the underground party bodies and commissars of large partisan formations in Ukraine, Belarus, Smolensk and Oryol regions. The meeting was attended by senior officials of the CSHPD. Speaking with a report, the head of the TsShPD Panteleimon Kondratievich Ponomarenko urged the partisans not to wait until they were armed with any theory of guerrilla warfare, but to beat the German there, and with what they had, to more actively carry out the wreckage of enemy trains. The commanders and commissars of the partisan detachments unanimously pointed out the need for effective leadership of the armed forces of the partisans, suggested that the headquarters develop major operations against the enemy, and sharply raised the issue of supplying the partisans with weapons, explosives and radios. The partisans wondered why, when they unleashed thousands of tons of explosives enclosed in air bombs on the enemy's railway junctions, the same explosives were dropped on the partisans only in tens of kilograms? Partis

they argued that the effect of undermining the enemy's railway trains is always more significant than that of bombardments. After the war, Hero of the Soviet Union M. I. Duka recalled that tens, hundreds of air bombs dropped on the Bryansk station caused only a four-hour break in the movement of the fascist echelons, and said that with the same amount of explosives, if they got to the partisans, it was possible to paralyze all traffic on the section of the Bryansk railway junction, putting hundreds of steam locomotives, thousands of wagons, platforms and tanks out of action! The commander of the raiding Ukrainian partisan unit S. A. Kovpak, asking to improve the supply of partisans, urged to give his unit, first of all, explosives, and not cartridges: having explosives, the unit will be able to send dozens of sabotage groups to enemy communications in different directions, inflict to the Nazis a lot of damage, sow panic in the camp of the enemy, disorientate the Nazis, and it does not matter if the partisans go on the raid a few days later.

The head of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, P.K. Ponomarenko, promised to take into account partisan wishes and requests [During the war, almost 100% of the radio communications equipment they had, 95% of the explosives used by the partisans, 70% of explosives, more than 90% of anti-tank rifles, about 80% of machine guns and cartridges for them.]. On the night of September 1, the meeting participants were received in the Kremlin by the leaders of the party and government. Four days later, on September 5, I. V. Stalin signed the order "On the tasks of the partisan movement." And the next day, September 6, the post of Commander-in-Chief of the partisan movement was introduced in the Red Army. K. E. Voroshilov was appointed to this position. Voroshilov is the partisan Commander-in-Chief! By taking up this position, Voroshilov marked the involvement of the most experienced military leaders in the TsShPD: Lieutenant General of Artillery Sivkov and Lieutenant General R.P. Khmel'nitsky. Sivkov was instructed to head the operational department of the headquarters, and Khmel'nitsky - the logistics department. Considering that by mid-September there was Soviet territory behind the front line with an area of about one million five hundred thousand square kilometers and that a hundred kilometers from the front line, the fascist German command had only security

divisions, battered reserves and rear units, that is, an extremely small number of troops, Voroshilov considered it necessary to immediately prepare and carry out powerful strikes against the fascist rear, to paralyze the work of enemy railways. Lieutenant General Sivkov and his subordinates began to develop a number of large-scale operations. Literally the entire headquarters was involved in the calculations of the partisans' future needs for explosives, weapons, ammunition, radio stations, mines and other means of struggle. Voroshilov, persistently seeking to provide the partisans with radio stations, tirelessly repeated that this was not only a military, not only technical, but first and foremost a most important political issue! By order of the marshal, we constantly wrote requirements for aircraft to fly behind enemy lines and deliver means of struggle to the partisans. Aircraft were given, but they were not enough, and Voroshilov ordered to create stocks of material and technical means. As a member of the GKO, he knew that by the spring of 1943, industry would increase the production of tanks, aircraft, guns, other types of weapons, ammunition, mine-explosive equipment and communications equipment. So he had the idea not just to create stocks of material and technical means for the partisans, but also to develop and then legalize the tables [15] of the means of struggle needed by the partisans. Naturally, the question arose about service mines. The marshal ordered an exhibition of mines to select the best examples. At the end of September, the technical department of the headquarters prepared such an exhibition, and an order was soon made for a number of exposed mines to the Military Engineering Directorate of the Red Army. Voroshilov also supported the idea of creating a regular partisan army behind enemy lines, expressed by General Sivkov. The head of the operational department of the TsSHPD proceeded from the fact that there were many servicemen left behind enemy lines who had not managed to break out of the encirclement in the forty-first year. Some of them went over to partisan operations in whole formations, as did the 208th motorized rifle division of Colonel V. I. Nichiporovich, some joined local partisan detachments. In addition, millions of adult, able-bodied Soviet people were in partisan territories and zones by the autumn of 1942.

Sivkov believed that, using the training and combat experience of the military personnel who remained behind the front line, large human reserves, the territory cleared army. Sivkov spoke on this subject with Voroshilov in my presence. Voroshilov listened to the general very attentively, thought about it, and decided: "That's right." Write a report addressed to Comrade Stalin. Since I was already an unwitting witness to this conversation, Sivkov invited me to take part in the preparation of the report. It was

written quickly. Having outlined the favorable conditions for the creation of a partisan army behind enemy lines, we pointed out that the units of the future regular partisan army are conceived not as ordinary army formations, but as special, maneuverable, capable of operating both in small units and large units, formations. They will be able to carry out massive mining of the enemy's lines of communication, and to raid his garrisons, and to carry out long-term raids behind enemy lines. It was proposed to introduce states in parts of the partisan army, to establish military buildings and corresponding official salaries. The army was supposed to be supplied with automatic weapons, means of communication, anti-tank and mine explosives, and medicines. Our proposal to create special technical and sabotage services in partisan headquarters, formations and detachments also found support from Voroshilov. The fact is that guided mines needed, due to the peculiarities of their device, careful storage and regular, thorough checks for suitability. There were not enough people who were technically literate in partisan detachments and formations. Keep the mines entrusted to simple suppliers. The result affected quickly: some of the best, delivered to the partisans with great difficulty and the risk of mines, hopelessly deteriorated. I remember, having arrived in Moscow, the secretary of the Chernigov regional committee, A.F. Fedorov, asked Voroshilov to provide his partisan unit with non-retrievable delayed-action anti-train mines. Calling me, Voroshilov inquired how many such mines and in what time frame

transfer to Chernigov. I answered. But he drew Fedorov's attention to the need for careful storage of these mines and skillful handling of them during installation.

"The technical department of the headquarters proposes to introduce technical and sabotage services in the detachments," Voroshilov explained. - How do you look

at this, Alexei Fyodorovich? - Completely - for! Fedorov said. Two more events of that time are connected with the activities of Voroshilov - the dispatch to the enemy's rear of detachments formed from instructors and cadets of VOSHON. At the beginning of September, M. N. Nikitin, head of the Leningrad headquarters of the partisan movement, who was in Moscow, asked me if it was true that there were Spaniards in VOSHON? — There are. And everyone is rushing to the rear of the notorious "Blue Division" ["Blue Division" - a unit sent by the Spanish fascist dictator Franco to help Hitler and fought against the troops of the Leningrad Front], - I answered, understanding what Nikitin was getting at.

"So what was the matter?"

- For the permission of the commander-in-chief, Mikhail Nikitich! Nikitin turned to Voroshilov, they went to VOSHON, talked with some Spaniard commanders (Anna was the translator), and Voroshilov agreed to send a mixed detachment of Spanish and Soviet soldiers to the enemy rear. The detachment included 124 people: Spaniards who had experience in fighting on the Southern and Kalinin fronts, as well as our cadets - junior commanders of the airborne and railway troops. Francisco Gulion was appointed commander of the detachment, his deputy was Angel Alberca, the same one who "kicked the Fritz with felt boots across the entire Taganrog Bay", chief of staff - young, but very energetic. initiative senior lieutenant Tsarevsky. We sent the second detachment of instructors and cadets of VOSHON to the Caucasus. It was like this. On a gloomy October day, I ran into General Vorobyov in the corridor of the Main Military Engineering Directorate. The general asked me to come into his office. There he asked how I look at the possibility of sending partisan saboteurs for joint operations with the guards miners in the Caucasus. The situation at the fronts remained difficult, there were no reasons for particular optimism,

and Mikhail Petrovich looked unusually cheerful, animated, it was felt that he was not saying something. Apparently, he knew that the preparations for the complete encirclement of the Nazis near Stalingrad were being completed, that the troops of the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front were also ready to deliver a powerful blow. I replied that joint actions of our groups with the guards miners were possible, but only Voroshilov could decide the question of sending cadets to the Caucasus. - I agree with him! Vorobyov said.

“And you start picking people up. A promising job awaits them! A day later, Voroshilov really ordered the formation of a detachment of volunteers for operations in the North Caucasus. There were a lot of volunteers, we selected one hundred and thirty-five people, and on November 11, a detachment under the command of Chepak, Ungrii and Bascugnano left for Tbilisi, to the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Transcaucasian Front, to act together with the local guards miners ... And exactly on November 6, by decree of the State Defense Committee, the post days, the Commander-in-Chief of the this ¹⁷ partisan movement was abolished. The decree stated that was done in the interests of greater flexibility in the leadership of the partisan movement and in order to avoid excessive centralization of this leadership. Voroshilov apparently knew about the upcoming GKO resolution: we noticed that the marshal was gloomy, taciturn, immersed in thoughts that he did not share ... Soon, generals Sivkov and Khmel'nitsky, Colonel Mamsurov also left the TsShPD. The question of creating a regular partisan army, of course, was no longer raised [In the work of the Military Scientific Directorate of the General Staff on the Great Patriotic War, published in 1958, it is said that with the approval of the commander-in-chief of the partisan movement, a proposal was made to create a regular partisan army behind enemy lines army, for which there were all conditions, and that the issue remained unresolved].

Chapter 22

It was getting colder, dry fine snow was falling, a drifting snow was spinning. Moscow stood in long lines for bread, shivered in old fur coats and quilted jackets, and warmed up by the temporary tin stoves, in the evenings she sat without light, saving electricity. But the call signs of the radio station named after the Comintern, barely sounding, made the capital forget about hunger and cold: the offensive of the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad fronts launched on November 19 continued, the enemy was defeated! Letters came from the Caucasus, Domingo Ungria and Major Bascugnano reported a warm welcome at the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Transcaucasian Front, offered to transfer the Spaniards who were in school to the Caucasus, assuring that the climatic conditions there were the most suitable for them. A more restrained letter from Captain Chepak contained hints of preparations for large-scale operations. I was glad that our comrades were well received, but worried whether they would be able to use them properly, whether they would make mistakes, as near Leningrad? From the radio messages of Francisco Gullon, we knew that the groups of his detachment, thrown out near Leningrad at different times at a great distance from each other, united only after long, dangerous crossings behind enemy lines and skirmishes with him. By the time they joined, they had run out of food, and inexperienced pilots were unsuccessful in dropping the cargo destined for the detachment, a significant part of them disappeared. The skis were delivered to the detachment very late. Half-starved fighters with three seriously wounded on makeshift stretchers moved for a long time, sinking into knee-deep snow. Gulion's people fought in these conditions as well. They laid mines, derailed enemy trains, blew up fascist vehicles, and destroyed the punishers. But what was it worth?! We did not want the same story to repeat itself in the Caucasus. So December came. Frosty, blizzard, closing the encirclement around the Stalingrad group of Nazi troops, initiating the liberation of Donbass, defeating the Kotelnikov group of the enemy,

trying to release the Wehrmacht divisions surrounded near Stalingrad. 1943 On the very first day of the new forty-third year, the fascist command, fearing that the rapid offensive of the Southern Front would lead to the encirclement of the fascist troops in the North Caucasus, began their hasty withdrawal from the Mozdok region in the north-western direction. The armies of the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front pursued the enemy. But it was more important to thwart the enemy's plan for a systematic withdrawal of troops and equipment, it was important to detain the Nazis in order to surround and destroy them. Therefore, the Headquarters decided to step up strikes against fascist communications in the North Caucasus. As early as January 8, the head of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement approved the "Assignment to intensify sabotage work in the occupied part of the North Caucasus." The task obliged the operational-training detachments of VOSHON to destroy the railway echelons, manpower, military facilities and headquarters of the enemy by mass sabotage, acting together with detachments of the

North Caucasian partisans. "Since a large force is being transferred to the Caucasus, you will also go there," Ponomarenko decided, talking with me about a new assignment, "You will coordinate work with the command of the Caucasian Front. While the documents were being drawn up, I managed to visit the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Red Army, to agree with General Vorobyov on the joint actions of the VOSHON groups and units of the battalion of guards miners.

- Can I go with you? Anna asked, helping with the hasty packing. No,

stay with the kids. Most Spaniards speak Russian quite tolerably. You won't need an interpreter. In Tbilisi January in Tbilisi means low, heavy clouds, rain, dampness, wet stones, muddy Kura. It was striking: the windows were not sealed with strips of paper, the faces of passers-by were not as haggard as those of Muscovites, children were everywhere. A lot of children were surprised, then I realized: well, yes, the children were not evacuated from here! At the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Transcaucasian Front, the head lieutenant colonel Nikolai Fedorovich Slyunin receives. We have known each other since the autumn of 1941: Slyunin's fighters set up barriers on the distant approaches to the capital, mined communications near Yelnya and Vyazma, and mac

enemy, blew up bridges and enemy trains between Smolensk, Orsha and Roslavl. Slyunin looked unimportant, probably not getting enough sleep. After mutual greetings, he slowly takes out an operational map, unhurriedly unfolds it:

- Here. Meet. Sparse black-and-white lines snaked across the pale green paint spilled on paper north of the brown one—the foothills of the Caucasus—and denoting even steppe spaces—sparse black-and-white lines—railroads. Between Rostov, Salsk, Tikhoretskaya and Krasnodar, blood dripped onto the black and white lines and spread into scarlet ovals, and not far from each oval there was a neatly drawn parachute. Everything is clear: parachutes indicate landing sites, and red ovals indicate areas of action for sabotage groups. Slyunin explained: sixteen sabotage groups were tasked with disrupting the organized withdrawal of troops and the removal of military equipment by the enemy to Rostov-on-Don. Twelve groups of eight men each were ordered to blow up railway bridges, and four groups of six men were ordered to mine railways. Just yesterday, another group was landed, commanded by Major Alexandrov and Major Bascugnano. The task of Aleksandrov and Bascugnano is to lead the previously thrown out people.

- We have here in general a "company on shares" arose, - for some reason, Slyunin joked sadly. - The miners are from the headquarters of the Inzhstroy, the Spaniards are from you, and the scouts and radio operators are from the intelligence department of the front. - When were the groups thrown out, Nikolai Fyodorovich? - The first - on the New Year, the last - on the seventeenth. Why such a gap in time? "But don't you know how it is?" You will prepare everything, discuss it, bring people to the airfield, and - hello: then the weather is there are no planes.

Well, that's not the worst. I was afraid that the groups were landing in the wrong place. -

Representatives of the parachute service assures that everyone was parachuted to the designated points! I asked if there was a connection with the saboteurs. It turned out that Lieutenant Campillo's group, which was the first to be thrown behind enemy lines, had already gone to their own. Four days later, Lieutenant Lorente joined the advancing units, went out to

aired Lieutenant Conisares. Campillo blew up two enemy tanks and three vehicles in nine days, killed and wounded several dozen Nazis in a shootout. Lorente was behind enemy lines for only three days. According to Slyunin, his group destroyed two dozen enemy soldiers and made a lot of noise in the fascist rear. Konisaree reported that he had reached the Salska area and derailed an enemy echelon. "A lot of noise", shootouts, only two tanks and a few cars. That way, the retreating enemy cannot be detained! - So, the rest of the groups are silent, and it is not

known what happened to them, Nikolai Fedorovich? — Alas! Slyunin spread his

hands. - The main thing is, Alexandrov and Bascugnano have sunk into the water! And then he got angry: - The

original plan did not provide for any coordinating group. These are your Ungria with Basku-piano and our scouts insisted. What for? From group to group, a hundred, or even more miles, there is no point in collecting them, and you yourself understand to lead saboteurs from afar! Then I learned that the headquarters of the engineering troops of the front had additionally formed three detachments of saboteurs from the fighters of the 15th and 16th Separate Guards battalions of miners and fighters of VOSCHON. They are concentrated in the zone of the Black Sea Group of Forces, near Tuapse and Adler. The landing sites of the detachments have been determined, but the planes have not yet been given. I asked Slyunin if he did not think that the lack of aircraft in this case was for the best. The silence of the groups is disturbing. I know the local steppes from the civil war. In winter, it's not like a person here - you can see a cat for a kilometer! If

the pilots were wrong... - My heart is restless, - admitted Slyunin. "But I'm afraid they won't understand us. Moscow is throwing thunder that we are giving the enemy a break.

"So he's still on the loose?" - Ilya

Grigorievich! Slyunin darkened. - The Germans destroy all the railways behind them, and on the local impassability, not only in cars, on horseback - and even that is difficult. Now we are pulling artillery and rear services on camels! Can you prove anything to anyone?.. Finally, we agreed that the headquarters of the engineering troops will take measures to accommodate the cadets who arrived in Tbilisi and other cities

VOSCHON, will arm them and put them at the mercy of the guards miners, and we will not hurry with the release of new groups until we receive information from comrades already abandoned behind enemy lines. That day I spoke with Captain Chepak. He managed to see Campillo and Lorente, he knew what we knew for the time being to Slyunin. Campillo and his people were thrown out in a given area, but Lorente's group, which was supposed to fly next, was detained at the airfield due to weather conditions. All night Campillo waited for his comrades to give a signal to their plane, but he did not wait. And Lorente was parachuted only a week later and was almost thrown into a settlement occupied by the enemy. The instructor had already given the command "go", opened the hatch, and if Corporal Yakov Kut stepped up to the hatch, under the wing of the plane, a flood of lights would be in trouble! After two or three minutes, the saboteurs nevertheless jumped into the night. We landed in the open steppe, but only in the morning we found one of the fighters, who was late with the jump and injured his leg while landing, and the cargo parachutes with mines and explosives were never found. It can be seen that the cargo parachutes were planned right on the head of the enemy, because at dawn a fascist reconnaissance plane began to circle over the steppe, and later a truck with enemy machine gunners rolled to the landing site. Lorente

managed to get the group out of harm's way. "He's just boiling," said Chepak. - We, he says, do not need pilots who throw people like bombs! Unlike Slyunin, Captain Chepak doubted that the rest of the groups had been

dropped in the right areas. "I think, however, everything will work out," said Chepak. — The Germans are actually fleeing. Soon all of our people may be in the liberated territory. I said nothing. Why flatter yourself with hope? And what's the point if the groups leave without completing the task? Black Sea Group of Forces On the third or fourth day of our stay in Tbilisi (we met trains with VOSHON cadets from Moscow), it became known that the troops of the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front advanced 300-320 kilometers, liberated many cities, in particular, Cherkessk, Nevinnomyssk, Stavropol and Armavir joined in the Salsk area with the advancing troops of the Southern Front. However, only a group of

Horsesaresa. Things were no better in the zone of the Black Sea Group of Forces. Successfully advancing to the north-west, the 56th Army, after fierce fighting, escaped from the mountains to the Kuban plain, approached Krasnodar, but from the groups of saboteurs operating near Krasnodar, only Jose Vieschi's group came out to their own. The rest, alas, still nothing was heard. Hoping to get some information about our people from the partisans, I went to Sochi, to the Southern Headquarters of the partisan movement, to see its chief P. I. Seleznev. Just a year ago, Pyotr Ianuaryevich, annoyed, told me that they overdid it with the training of partisans in the region, but now he headed the partisan headquarters. Unfortunately, Seleznev knew nothing about the fate of our groups. He explained that the local partisans, because of the difficult natural conditions - all around the steppe - are forced to operate either from bases in the mountains or underground, and communication with them is difficult. "Don't worry, if we

find out anything, we will immediately inform the front headquarters!" Seleznev said. - And in general, the days of the Nazis in the Caucasus are numbered! From Sochi, fortunately, it was not far, I went to Adler and Tuapse, met people from those sabotage detachments about which Slyunin spoke. With the exception of the Spanish comrades and a few commanders from VAUCHON, they were nineteen-twenty-year-old boys - cheerful, cheerful, eager to fight, but naive, having no idea of \u200b\u200boperations behind enemy lines. They had to be seriously prepared. In Tuapse, Chepak found me by phone. He said that young Spaniards from local military registration and enlistment offices were coming to the VOShon detachments (they were taken from fascist Spain as children, they grew up, they consider the USSR their second homeland!) And their number had already far exceeded the number indicated for the VOSCHON detachments in the documents of the rear headquarters of the Red Army. How to be? Children need to be fed, clothed and shoes! I'm going to the rear headquarters of the Black Sea Group of Forces. They meet politely, listen attentively, sympathize and explain that they have no right to enroll "extra people" for allowance:

"A limit is a limit, Comrade Colonel!" I share my concerns with an old acquaintance - intelligence officer Colonel Yegnarov:

"You see, I tapped out a telegram to Moscow, but when will they answer!

"So turn to the Military Council of the group of troops!" What is easier! By the way, you should know the member of the Military Council. It's the Colonies! It is true that I have known Major General S.A. Kolonin from my service since the thirties, I met him at the beginning of the war on the borders near Moscow. This is a smart, enterprising, decisive person, he will surely help! I understood the colony perfectly: "Let's go to the commander, we'll decide everything at once!" Passing me into the office of the commander of the Black Sea Group of Forces, Lieutenant General I. E. Petrov, a member of the Military Council announced:

"I brought the saboteur, Ivan Efimovich!" Petrov raised his head from papers, pince-nez sparkled, eyebrows converged to the bridge of the nose.

- Kidding! Your saboteur! Colony laughed. - Here's the catch ... It is unlikely that any of the senior officers of the Red Army did not hear about Petrov in those days, about his courage and military leadership. The head of the defense of Odessa and Sevastopol, he already then became a legendary person, although he did not differ in heroic appearance, he looked like either a doctor or a teacher. Here are just the eyes ... These were the eyes of a fearless, strong-willed person! After listening to Kolonin and me, Petrov ordered that all the Spanish youths who joined the VOSCHON detachments be included in the Black Sea Group of Forces, enrolled in all types of allowances, and then began to ask about the old Spanish fighters and about the VOSCHON cadets. After answering the commander's questions, I expressed my concerns about the unsuccessful releases of sabotage groups from aircraft:

"There is reason to believe that some aircrews have no landing experience, Comrade Lieutenant General. Especially at night. Petrov objected that experience is a gain, and advised us to think about the possibility of landing our people by sea. "Agree on this issue with the intelligence officers of the Black Sea Fleet," said Petrov. - But first of

all, contact our operational department, get acquainted with the situation and draw up a plan of action against enemy communications. I followed Petrov's instructions immediately. He introduced himself to the chief of staff of the Black Sea Group of Forces, Major General Yermolaev, and to the commanders of the operational department of the headquarters. I was brought into the business. We agreed

that I submit proposals on actions against enemy communications upon my return from the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet.

“The headquarters of the sailors is in Poti,” they told me. “The quickest way to get there is by torpedo boat. If you want, we'll call the sailors... One hundred and ten kilometers from Sukhumi to Poti the torpedo boat covered in a little over an hour. But what an hour it was! It turned out that the shaking on the boat, even with a small wave, is more than in the back of a truck, which a naughty driver drives along a pole road at a speed of eighty kilometers! All the way I stood on half-bent legs, convulsively clinging to the handrails ... The reward for this was the friendliness of the sailors. The head of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, captain of the first rank Namgeladze, not only spoke about the possibilities of landing by sea, but also introduced him to the most advantageous landing sites on the coast, starting from Novorossiysk and ending with the Crimean peninsula, Directorate of the headquarters of the Black Sea Group of Forces, Chepak and I developed and submitted to Major General Yermolaev a plan to disrupt the operation of enemy communications in front of the front of the Black Sea Group of Forces with sabotage means. This happened on the eve of the battles for the well-known Malaya Zemlya.

Chapter 23

Saboteurs in the North Caucasus and Crimea At the end of January, the troops of the Southern Front reached the eastern approaches to Shakhty, Novocherkassk and Rostov-on-Don, and the troops of the North Caucasian Front [the North Caucasian Front was created on January 24, 1943 at the base (Northern On February 5, troops of the Black Sea Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front were also transferred to him, the Black Sea Fleet, and later the Azov Flotilla, were operationally subordinated to him. liberated Maykop, pressed the enemy northeast of Krasnodar, approached the Kuban and Ust-Labinskaya. Even at the beginning of the operation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the troops of the Black Sea - group to capture Novorossiysk and liberate the Taman Peninsula in order to prevent the enemy from escaping to the Crimea through the Kerch Strait. assistance to the main forces of the Black Sea Group of Forces in the capture of Novorossiysk, which was considered the key to the entire Taman Peninsula, on the night of February 4, landing began in the area of South Ozereyka and Stanichka - the suburbs of Novorossiysk. And on February 5, the commander of the Black Sea Group of Forces, I.E. Petrov, and a member of the Military Council, S.K. Colonies, approved a plan to disrupt the operation of enemy communications in front of the front of the Black Sea Group of Forces. In accordance with this plan, from February 7 to 15, two detachments of saboteurs of thirty people each and four sabotage groups of six people were to be transferred behind enemy lines north of Novorossiysk to mine the alleged escape routes of the Nazis and disable the railway linking Novorossiysk with Krasnodar. Three groups of twelve people were to be thrown onto the Kerch Peninsula. After the Rostov-on-Don railway junction was put out of action, the Dzhankoy-Vladislavovka-Kerch railway became the main line supplying the Nazi troops in the Krasnodar Territory. Along this highway they should have

strike saboteurs, acting together with the Crimean partisans. Radio communication with the detachments thrown onto the Taman Peninsula was to be carried out by means of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the Black Sea Group of Forces, and with groups thrown into the Crimea, by means of the Crimean headquarters of the partisan movement. When approving the plan, Lieutenant General Petrov drew our attention to the special importance of destroying the enemy's Kerch communications, and indicated the objects to be destroyed in the first place. The transfer of detachments and groups was planned by land, sea and air. We immediately began preparing detachments and groups. Most disturbing was the landing of saboteurs in the Crimea. After the withdrawal of our troops from the Kerch Peninsula and the fall of Sevastopol, the Crimean partisans, with whom they had to interact, were left face to face with the army of the invaders, who possessed the most modern equipment. The enemy succeeded in blocking the partisans in the wooded mountains, capturing many of the partisan food bases created in advance. The partisans lost strength and even died of hunger. They continued to fight in these terrible conditions, diverting significant forces of the Nazis, but it seemed doubtful that they would be able to provide significant support to our sabotage groups. I met with the head of the Crimean headquarters of the partisan movement, the secretary of the Crimean regional committee, V.S. Bulatov, to discuss the issues of interaction between partisans and saboteurs, but Bulatov did not say anything encouraging. "The partisan detachments are still in a difficult situation," Bulatov said, adjusting his glasses every now and then, nervously. - On the one hand, the sea, on the other - the steppes with enemy garrisons, and the mountains are cut by roads, where fascist patrols in tanks and armored vehicles ply.

- Do you think that the amphibious assault of our groups is unlikely will be successful? The partisans will not be able to help?

- Yes. I don't think they can. It's better to drop airborne assaults. Maybe at the same time it will be possible to drop food to the partisans?

"Don't they throw him away?" -
Very little.

- Strange. Judging by the number of Crimean partisans, they only need twenty-five to thirty tons of food per month! With your high position, Vladimir Semenovich ... Bulatov quickly adjusted his glasses:

"Do you know what it's like to ask for planes?" Every time they answer me that partisans are partisans to provide for themselves at the expense of the enemy. They say in person that we don't know how to "organize a partisan struggle. Overcome, they say, difficulties, but don't rely on Allah! In the way they answered Bulatov, I heard familiar motives, but still I was not able to believe that nothing could be done to provide the Crimean partisans with food.

- Let's turn to a member of the Military Council of the Transcaucasian front to comrade Kaganovich! I suggested. Bulatov was delighted.

- Ilya Grigorievich, do not put off the matter indefinitely! I managed to get an appointment with Kaganovich. But as soon as the talk turned to the Crimean partisans, he abruptly interrupted me, said that he did not give alms, cursed and kicked me out of the office. That's how it all ended.

- I will write to Stalin again! - Having heard the details of this visit, Bulatov sighed. - I'm afraid the first letter was not reported ... Bulatov firmly promised one thing - to organize reliable radio communications with our groups. In the first days of February, many groups of our saboteurs began to leave the enemy rear, to unite with the advancing troops. Major Bascugnano's group also came out. Weathered, hoarse, he spoke with a purely Spanish temperament about the pilots who had thrown fighters with it near an enemy airfield. "They immediately sent a company against us!" the Major

croaked, straining his vocal cords. - Surrounded! What can be done? Only one thing: lead the soldiers to break through! Led. They broke through, but the scout Pozdnyakova and junior sergeant Bazilevich disappeared. Maybe killed. Don't know. Could not install, left. And then seven people got frostbite, and one of them fell behind at night ... Not having, like Lorente, the opportunity to pick up a load of explosives and mines dropped into the enemy's location, Bascugnano began to move towards the advancing formations of the Northern Group of Forces. Along the way, he attacked separate groups of enemy soldiers and officers, in one place he managed to dismantle the railway track ...

- If we were parachuted to the indicated place, would we have lost so many people ?! Is that how they would fight? Major was outraged. Even more tragic was the fate of the groups of Lieutenant Antonio Coronado and Second Lieutenant S. M. Fesyuk. We learned about this immediately after the liberation of the villages of Shkurinskaya and Kislyakovskaya. The Coronado group was thrown out next to Shkurinskaya. The Nazis immediately combed the area. Surrounded by the open steppe, the paratroopers took refuge in a large one. haystack. In an unequal battle, some of them died, and the Nazis burned the wounded, but still alive, in that haystack. Fesyuk's group was thrown directly onto Kislyakovskaya. By chance, only the miner Alexei Sidorovich Delii survived ... It was not worth blaming the pilots and officers of the parachute service for what had happened. Moreover, they carried out the landing of some groups brilliantly. So, the group of Lieutenant Rioch, thrown out to the west of the village of Varenikova and at a sufficient distance from it, managed to calmly assemble, searched for cargo parachutes, safely advanced to a given area, mined the bridges and roads there, obtained valuable intelligence data, established contact with local partisans from the Blinov detachment , helped them with explosives and weapons, crossed the front line without loss and brought to her sailor paratrooper V. A. Bovt and a radio operator from a downed bomber K. S. Sergeev. The group of Lieutenant Sanchez, dropped at the appointed place, also acted successfully and also did not suffer losses. It was possible to establish that successful landings were carried out by pilots who had previously served in the civilian air fleet, flying on difficult routes, often blindly due to sudden changes in the weather, or military pilots from old-timers who made night flights and in peacetime. Reporting this to the commander of the Black Sea Group of Forces, Petrov, I asked to be instructed to assign only nightlights to the landing. I also said that I was worried about the transfer of saboteurs by land: according to intelligence, a large number of troops had accumulated on the Taman Peninsula near the retreating enemy, all settlements were clogged with them, traffic on the roads did not stop, and in the absence of reliable natural shelters, this represented a very large number of troops for our groups. danger. Petrov promised to take measures for the selection of reliable aircraft crews, he noted that war without victims is not

it happens, but senseless sacrifices are criminal... The seventh passed, the eighth passed, the ninth of February was left behind. A storm was raging on the sea, the wind bent the poplars and cypresses, but was unable to speed up the slow movement of the barely creeping gray, blue-violet, blue-black clouds that stuck around the mountains. Aviation was inactive, the fleet worked, only to Malaya Zemlya, where fierce battles flared up. On the night of the tenth, taking advantage of the bad weather, we tried to smuggle two groups across the front line, but they were discovered while approaching the front line, the enemy retreated. The attempt to transport them across the front line in another sector on February 12 also ended in failure: the beaten Nazis showed extreme caution, their defenses were densely saturated with infantry units. Finally, on February 23, on Red Army Day, the first group of saboteurs was transferred by sea behind enemy lines. Then, within twenty days, six more groups. Among them are the groups of Juan Lorente, José Vieschi and Campillo. They operated on the Taman Peninsula. Everyone completed the task. Lossless - Lorente and Vieschi groups. But Campillo fell to hard trials, Campillo's group consisted of fifteen people. She had ten days to complete the task. Ten days later, the saboteurs were supposed to pick up a boat in the agreed place. The first failure lay in wait during the landing: the group was discovered by the Nazi coast guard. Breaking away from his pursuers, Lieutenant Campillo was forced to hide in the floodplains, to go far from the area where he was to strike at the enemy. At the cost of great effort, the group carried out the order, but the territory was clogged with enemy troops, the coast and approaches to it were very heavily guarded, the miners could not go to the meeting point with the boat at the agreed time, and the boat approaching the meeting point was met by anti-aircraft artillery fire and fascist machine guns. Lying among the coastal stones, Campillo's soldiers saw how the sailors, maneuvering, kept close to the coast for some time, but then went to the open sea ... So, alone. But there is no food, and it makes no sense to hope that the boat will return. Moreover, the Nazis understand: the boat cruised here for a reason, they are about to start combing the area. We must leave. We must leave immediately! Campillo contacted Chepak by radio, requested food and explosives, and moved towards the village of Greko-Maisky: there

the partisan detachment of Blinov was operating, about which Lieutenant Rioja reported. If aviation does not help out, the partisans will help out! During the time of wandering through the steppe and floodplains, sometimes not being able to light a fire during the day, so as not to draw the attention of invaders and traitors to the smoke rising in a secluded place, spending the night in wet clothes on bare ground, and then again making long transitions, people got tired. There seemed to be little left to go to the area where Blinov operated, about a hundred kilometers, but the safest path ran through mountainous terrain, along rocky, sometimes steep paths, and the group moved slowly. It was decided to feed the last can of condensed milk to the only fighter who, after the appearance of the aircraft, would have to find and drag the dropped cargo. The plane arrived only on the fourth day. Fortunately; bags of food and explosives dropped to the group fell just two hundred to two hundred and fifty meters from the thick bushes where the Campillo fighters lay down. Rested, refreshed people cheered up. But if many people's shoes are frayed, and a few people have rubbed their feet, you won't go fast! During the night it was possible to overcome only eight to ten kilometers. The discarded food lasted only two days. The last two nights went hungry again. And they went out ... to an ambush of punishers: shortly before this, Blinov's detachment was discovered, defeated, its remnants went into the mountains.

Campillo's group did not flinch, accepted an unequal battle. The punishers failed to surround our soldiers, cut off their escape route. But in a fierce battle, the detachment's radio operator, Lieutenant Pichkaev, a fearless soldier, the former secretary of the Spanish Youth Union Justo Rodriguez, a skilled miner, a man of great courage, Bautista, died ... Campillo and the surviving soldiers broke away from the chase. Feeding on water and the roots of wild plants, they reached the front line. Having collected the remnants of forces, crawling and dashing, under enemy fire, they reached our trenches. Everyone except Campillo. There were only twenty or thirty steps to the trench when an anti-personnel mine exploded under the lieutenant's foot. The fallen commander was dragged to his own, bandaged, fortunately, the orderlies, the paramedic immediately appeared, and everything went on as usual: the regimental medical center, the medical battalion, the hospital. Upon learning of Campillo's injury, I went to see him.

This time I was not lucky! the lieutenant said bitterly. "And how are the others, my colonel?" Are you out? Alive? The fate of his comrades still worried him more than his own. Visited Campillo and the commander of the Black Sea Group of Forces, Lieutenant General I. E. Petrov. He wished the heroic miner a full recovery, presented him with the Order of the Red Banner, ordered the lieutenant to be given enhanced nutrition, and said in parting that the Soviet people would never forget the exploits of their Spanish friends. The commander's attention to the Spaniard officer excited all the cadets of our school who were in the Caucasus. It remains for me to tell about one more feat, about the feat of the Soviet and Spanish soldiers, who in March of the forty-third year carried out a particularly important task of the command of the Black Sea Group of Forces. I have already written that at that time the Dzhankoy-Vladislavovka-Kerch railway remained the enemy's main line supplying the Nazi troops in the Krasnodar Territory. The command demanded from the partisans and from our detachments to keep it under attack. In addition, at the beginning of March, it was necessary to check information about the arrival in the Crimea, at one of the enemy's secret training grounds, of new equipment. For this, the headquarters of the Black Sea Group of Forces ordered the creation of a small, well-trained group of miners and scouts from volunteers. There was not a person among the scouts and miners who would not know what it is like for those who are thrown into the Crimea. And yet there was no end to the volunteers! The numerical composition of the group was determined to be eleven people. The candidates were selected very carefully. They took into account physical and moral data, experience behind enemy lines, the quality of special training, character traits, giving preference to cheerful, resourceful, accommodating people with a quick reaction. By March 10, the selection was completed. The commander of the group was appointed thirty-three-year-old Major Miguel Boiso, his deputy was thirty-five-year-old Major Fucimaño. radio operator - Lieutenant Vadim Andreevich Tarnovsky. In addition to them, the group included Yegor Kuzakin, Alexei Kubashev, Juan Armenteros, Rodriguez Bara, Luis Jose, Pedro Pen, Chalo, Jose Peral and Juan Poiso. For the landing of the group in the Crimea, the crew of the aircraft of the Hero of the Soviet Union Koshub was allocated. On the night of March 14, 1943, the Boiso-Fusimagno group flew to

deep rear of the enemy, jumped out on parachutes near the village of Shubina. For several days and nights, the radio operators of the military department of the Black Sea Group of Forces listened intently to the air, hoping to distinguish Tarnovsky's call signs in the chaos of the Morse code. He got in touch on the evening of the fifth day. He conveyed the most valuable information about the approaches to the enemy's secret training ground, reported on the destruction of three echelons on the Dzhankoy-Vladislavovka line and hastily tapped: the group had been discovered, pressed to the sea, and was fighting an unequal battle. At this point, the transmission was interrupted. Later they found out: the miners and scouts fought with the enemy many times superior in number to the last grenade, to the last cartridge, and the cartridges ran out - the survivors went to the Nazis with knives. They died in hand-to-hand combat. The information transmitted by Tarnovsky allowed the next group of miners and scouts to get to the Nazi secret training ground without loss, discover new tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts concentrated there, and obtain information about the enemy novelty - the Focke-Wulf 190A aircraft. The Northern Group of Forces failed to encircle and destroy the fascist troops fleeing to Rostov-on-Don and Azov. The groups of miners thrown out on the retreat route did not get enough time for sabotage work: already on the third or fifth day after the landing, they found themselves in the zone of action of the advancing Soviet troops. The troops of the North Caucasian Front were unable to liberate Novorossiysk in the spring of forty-three, to clear the Taman, Kerch and Crimean peninsulas from the Nazis. Therefore, it was not possible to carry out in full the plan of disrupting the work of enemy communications in front of the front of the Black Sea Group of Forces. Operating behind enemy lines, groups of miners and mixed detachments of miners and scouts suffered losses, and three groups were killed. True, in the battle with scouts and miners, and mainly from explosions of mines under trains, the enemy suffered losses that far exceeded ours. But the dea

Chapter 24

On the morning of March 9, he invited the Colonies, introduced him to the GKO resolution of March 7, 1943, on the disbandment of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement as having completed the task. saboteurs and partisans constantly conducted reconnaissance of the enemy. I am still glad that fate brought me together with the wonderful intelligence officer Colonel Mikhailov, with the commander of the famous partisan detachment Mikhail Trifonov, who bore the pseudonym Yugov underground, with the authorized representative of the UShPD in the 5th shock army, captain D. B. Belykh, a young and daring partisan by vocation, who became a journalist and scientist after the war. But my stay on the Southern Front turned out to be very short, no more than a month, and I do not want to divert the reader's attention from those main events in the partisan movement that took place in the spring of forty-three. The fact is that already in mid-April, a categorical order was issued by telephone to immediately fly to the capital, to UShPD, to work as deputy chief of staff. I was given only two hours to get ready. Two hours later I was back on the plane, only now the Li-2 was heading northeast... * * * The longer the flight lasted, the more often I looked out the window, trying to guess the approach of the Moscow region. The greasy blackness of the steppes was replaced by snow-covered ravines stitched with white stitches, reddish fields studded with a rare bristle of copses, blackened green waves of pine forests rolled over them, snow, although not solid and dim, lay even now on meadows and arable lands, and roads, villages and towns are getting closer and closer. , as if from the cold, pressed against each other. Soon, now soon! The impatience was easy to explain. Spring-summer battles were coming, and no one doubted that the Nazis would again try to attack, take revenge for Stalingrad, and regain the strategic initiative. We will either deliver a preemptive strike, or you will be in a deliberate defense and only then, having wound the enemy, will we go on the counteroffensive. Something like this thought Tolbukhin and members of the

Council of the Southern Front. They had no disagreements about exactly where the enemy would try to attack. Both agreed that the decisive events would unfold in the center of the Soviet-German front, quite possibly in the area of the so-called Kursk salient, where the fascist German troops were occupying advantageous positions. Of course, these were just guesses. Nevertheless, everyone lived and worked in anticipation of impending formidable events. Therefore, I connected the call to Moscow, the appointment to the post of deputy chief of the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement with the preparation for these events and assumed that for the partisans this would be preparation, first of all, for attacks on the enemy's railway communications. Indeed, many of the communications of the Nazis pass through the territory of Ukraine, and whether the enemy is able or unable to fully use them, whether we succeed in disrupting the strategic, mainly rail transportation of the Wehrmacht, will largely depend, if not the outcome, then the course of hostilities. spring and summer of forty-three. And we are capable, we can disrupt the transportation of the enemy! I reasoned something like this: on the territory of Ukraine, still occupied by the enemy, we have significant forces. The Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement has a stable, reliable connection with them, and the industry has already launched the production of wonderful engineering mines, including delayed-action mines. If it is possible to provide Ukrainian partisans with these mines and explosives, who have accumulated excellent experience in operating behind enemy lines, by the start of hostilities, then hundreds of enemy steam locomotives, thousands of wagons, platforms and tanks will fly down a slope; hundreds of fascist tanks and guns, hundreds of thousands of shells will not reach the front line; thousands of fascist soldiers will fall without seeing the front line, and the railway junctions captured by the Nazis will be blocked. It is not difficult to imagine the consequences of this!.. The Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement was located on Tverskoy Boulevard, in one of the outbuildings of house number 18, where many leaders of the Communist Party and members of the government of Ukraine worked at that time. I arrived at Tverskoy Boulevard straight from the airfield, not wanting to postpone my meeting with the Chief of Staff, Major General Timofei Amvrosievich Strokach. We have known each other for almost two years. We saw each other for the first time at a meeting of p

worked at the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, met very often. Chief of Staff UShPD Strokach Strokach's office is on the second floor of the right, clean, well-tidy outbuilding. Timofei Amvrosievich listens to the performance, shakes hands firmly, congratulates him on his arrival, invites his deputy for personnel L.P. Drozhzhin and deputy for operational issues, Colonel V.F. Sokolov. We are familiar with Leonid Petrovich and Vasily Fedorovich, it is not required to introduce us to each other. Drozhzhin gives me an order to read, by which I am appointed deputy chief of the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement for sabotage, holds out a pen: - Sign, Ilya Grigorievich. This order has not yet

been cancelled. The atmosphere is relaxed. We sit down. I learn that the combat plan of the Ukrainian partisans for the spring and summer has actually been developed. "Colonel Sokolov will acquaint you with

the plan," says Strokach. - But the time is hot, every day counts, if there are comments, please report back tomorrow. He is interested in how I am going to build the work. I consider it necessary to create a sabotage department at the headquarters. There are people to work in the department. In the future, we will probably involve other designers and instructors of mine-blasting. It is necessary to improve methods of sabotage, to generalize and disseminate combat experience, to establish close contact with scientists and industry. The question of creating a new department, called "technical", and the question of enrolling Boris Fyodorovich Kosov, Sergey Vasilyevich Gridnev, Fyodor Ivanovich Pavlov, who arrived with me, and a former Rostov student, the reliable secretary of the department, Nina Vladimirovna Malykh, to the staff of the department, is decided right there. - Vasily Fedorovich, show Ilya Grigorievich his office, - the

general addresses Sokolov - Pick up a room for the department too. And tell the administrators to make the keys for people. The office intended for me was right there, on the second floor, three doors from the office of the chief of staff and next to Sokolov's office. Showing the room, Vasily Fedorovich asked:

- Did you hear the news? .. The central headquarters of the partisan movement is recreated.

- It turns out that it was liquidated prematurely? - It turns out so. - And what, the

Ukrainian headquarters will be as before ... - No, - Sokolov

did not let him finish. "Now we are not even operationally subordinate to the Central Headquarters. We are led only by the Central Committee of the Party of Ukraine and the Stavka. Two news at once, and what! The third piece of news awaited at home. In the first minutes, greeting Anna and the children, laying out the saved food from the duffel bag, washing my face and exchanging phrases that are usual after a long separation, I did not feel anything. Only at dinner it seemed that Anna was silent about something. He looked at her closely, pretending not to notice her gaze. So something serious. He waited until he put the children to bed, then asked: "What? There is a hesitation in the eyes of the usually resolute wife. She covered my hand with a soft palm: - Gulion is wounded. -

When? Where is he injured? - In the stomach. Bullet. When crossing the front line, - They left a long time ago?

- Back in March. —

What about others? Anna went to the window, staring into the darkness of our

yard.

Why are you silent, Anya? She turned around sharply. There are unshed tears in his eyes, restrained by an effort of will: "Get ready... They

will tell you anyway. And she said that back in the winter, Padillo, Lorente and Justo, well known to both of us, died while performing tasks, and Angel Alberca, Joaquin Gomez and Benito Ustarros, while crossing the front line. Every name Anna called fell on me like a blow. Padillo - the nights of Granada, the first echelons of the Francoists. Lorente - offensive near Huesca, the first blown up enemy truck. Justo - the first fascist bombing of Jaen, a rescued four-year-old girl. Alberca - minefields near Madrid, "mined boots" on the Taganrog ice. Gomez - Granada, Huesca, Madrid, Kalinin. Ustarros is a fighter pilot on a "snub-nosed" sky in Madrid, Kharkov, Rostov, Moscow region... I sat without raising my head.

Courageous, just people, experienced, hardy, demanding nothing for themselves soldiers! "Alberka

and Ustarros were posthumously presented with the Orders of the Patriotic War of the 1st degree," I heard Anna's voice. — And the rest? - Don't know.

The first evening after a long separation turned out to be bleak for us. He would become even bleaker if we knew that Francisco Gullon would soon die from his wound. But fate spared, did not let me look ahead. Deputy Head of the UShPD for sabotage The next day, I took on my new duties. He began by studying the voluminous "Operational Plan of Combat Actions of the Partisans of Ukraine for the Spring-Summer Period of 1943", handed over by Sokolov. In various orders and plans for the leadership of the partisan movement, especially in the early stages of the partisan movement, calls to strike at enemy communications were often lost in calls to defeat headquarters, individual fascist enemy garrisons, units, to set fire to warehouses, Inexperienced ~~damage to enemy communications~~ damage to enemy communications, and so on. detachments and formations dispersed their forces, spending them on secondary, and even tertiary tasks. The situation changed for the better after the Order of the People's Commissar of Defense of September 5, 1942, which set the partisans as the main task of closing the enemy's supply routes to the front of reserves, equipment, ammunition and fuel. "The operational plan of combat operations of partisans of Ukraine for the spring-summer period of 1943" took into account the requirement of the September order. He ordered the largest partisan formations of Ukraine to enter the territory of its western and southwestern regions and strike at twenty-six major railway junctions. It was supposed to throw into detachments and formations up to three hundred people of command and political staff and at least one hundred and thirty-nine tons of various cargoes. The transport aircraft of the 101st aviation regiment of the BC Grizodubova, as well as the aircraft of the 1st and 62nd air transport divisions, were to make at least two hundred and fifty sorties to the enemy rear. The focus and scope of the plan was impressive. However, as I understand it, the phrase "strike on railway junctions" meant direct attacks on these junctions,

their capture, the destruction of arrows, pumps, semaphores, warehouses and station buildings. Consciousness immediately gave a signal of danger. Especially strong after Anna's story yesterday about unjustified losses and unnecessary sacrifices. Immediately after the failure of the "blitzkrieg", the fascist command began to pay close attention to the protection of the railways. Already on October 16, 1941, Goering issued a directive requiring that every Russian approaching the railway line be shot or hanged for at least a kilometer! Later, similar directives from executioners of all ranks fell like a cornucopia. The protection of the railways was strengthened by the enemy as the number of sabotage increased. In a number of places, it became extremely difficult for partisans to even approach the railway track. And the enemy took special care of the protection of large railway junctions! Moreover, these were large cities where the Nazis kept strong garrisons with artillery, and in some cases tanks. The command of such a garrison could at a critical moment call for help and aviation. Attacking a major railroad junction with only small arms, two or three mortars, rarely a couple of cannons, and not being able to count on reinforcements, meant taking huge risks, suffering very heavy losses without hope of complete success. Everything in me rebelled against it! Went to Sokolov. Hearing that the plan should still be thought about and serious adjustments should be made to it, Vasily Fyodorovich threw up his hands: - Ilya Grigoryevich, my friend, for two months now we have been doing nothing but making these damned adjustments!

Take a look at the calendar, spring will soon be over!

However, amendments are needed. You can't dismiss your own experience. I explained to Sokolov why, in my opinion, the task of paralyzing the enemy's railways on the territory of Ukraine would not be accomplished if we sent detachments and formations to seize railway junctions and destroy them. - Ta-a-a-k!

Sokolov drawled. — What do you propose? Leave these knots alone? - Not really! I

propose to orient the partisans to the decommissioning of the same railway junctions, only with the help of mass wrecks of enemy trains, Vasily Fedorovich. Moreover, on

warehouses contain tens of thousands of various anti-train mines and wheel locks. I have already dealt with this. Sokolov considered. I drew his attention to another important circumstance: the figures for the losses of Ukrainian partisans in personnel are inversely proportional to the figures showing the number of sabotage committed on the enemy's railways. The partisans suffered the greatest losses in the forty-first year, when they carried out only thirty train wrecks. In the forty-second year, the losses in people were reduced, and the number of sabotage increased to two hundred and twenty. In February and March, the losses of the forty-third partisans turned out to be scanty in general, and one hundred and twenty-one echelons of the enemy flew downhill in just two months! Sokolov sighed.

- This, of course, convinces, Ilya Grigorievich, but we can't just delay the final approval of the plan, almost rewrite it all over again. It is forbidden! "But how is that, Vasily

Fyodorovich?! - And you do not get excited, you listen. Themselves urge to reckon with reality. So, our reality is such that every lost day will inevitably lead to a reduction in the number of sorties behind enemy lines. And this means that the headquarters will not give the partisans either the planned number of weapons or the planned amount of explosives. How then will you produce sabotage? It's my turn to think. Sokolov reassured:

"There is no reason to be alarmed. Firstly, partisan commanders are learned people, they won't rush to storm railway junctions for a great life. How did Von Kovpak deal with Sarny last fall? Not hit in the forehead, but blew up the bridges around. Now others will do the same. Maybe they will send small groups of miners onto the roads, and that's it! Saburov, by the way, is set as an example for such tactics. - Well, firstly, and

secondly? "And secondly, the plan, of course, will be refined," Sokolov replied calmly. "Then we will make the necessary corrections. In working order, as they say. After hesitating, I said that I still considered it necessary to report my thoughts to Strokach.

- Please report it! Sokolov agreed. - Just do not insist on altering the plan! We don't have time for you! Timofei Amvrosievich listened to me attentively, but he was cautious about the proposal to completely abandon the idea of capturing railway junctions and to switch to blowing up enemy trains. First of all, I noticed that some special mines, say, ampoule (chemical), delayed-action anti-train mines with vibration locks are completely unfamiliar to partisans.

- I myself hear about vibration lockers for the first time from you, - said Strokach, - And even the graduates of our special school in Saratov have no idea about delayed-action mines! What to say about ordinary partisans? "Let's train them, Comrade General." -

Hundreds of people? To do this, you need to prepare instructors, Comrade Colonel! - Comrade General, instructors and

graduates of the former Higher School for Special Purposes will soon arrive in Moscow from the Caucasus. Strokach still hesitated: "Will we have time to call people from the detachments

and formations for study?" - So let's arrange training for people directly in the rear

enemy! We'll send instructors there. I can fly myself! - And

if the units are already going on raids? "You can also learn in raids, Comrade General!" Strokach walked around the office: -

Let's do it. You will state your views in writing, and I will present them to the Central Committee of

the CP(b)U. "But do you agree with me, Comrade General?" - Considering the experience of Kovpak and Saburov, I agree. However, let's hear what they say from above. The idea of blocking and incapacitating the enemy's railway junctions with the help of mines in the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Ukraine was approved. Without requiring an immediate redrawing of the plan for spring-summer hostilities and a complete renunciation of the seizure of railway junctions, they recommended, at the same time, to develop, duplicate and send instructions to the partisans of Ukraine on the use of the latest mines as soon as possible, to throw instructors in mine blasting into detachments and formations,

delivery to partisans simultaneously with explosives mines of a new design. "You see,"

Sokolov said. "So little by little everything will settle down.

Chapter 25

On April 23, in the afternoon, General Strokach invites Colonel Sokolov and me to his office. Timofei Amvrosievich looks preoccupied. He reports that in the morning he had a very serious conversation with the head of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, P.K. Ponomarenko. The Central Headquarters believes with good reason that the disruption of the enemy's railway transportation has not yet reached such a scale as to significantly affect the provision of the fascist German troops with manpower reserves, equipment, ammunition and fuel. Sabotage is not carried out simultaneously, but at random, and the enemy eliminates their consequences without much difficulty. According to Panteleimon Kondratievich Ponomarenko, the collapse of enemy trains and undermining enemy bridges, even if we double or triple their number, will still not give the desired effect. We need a well-planned, simultaneous mass strike on enemy communications. It is impossible to hesitate with this blow in anticipation of fierce summer battles. The central headquarters of the partisan movement conceived an operation code-named "rail war". During the operation, all the forces of the partisans will be thrown to undermine the rails. According to preliminary estimates of the TsShPD, approximately 300,000 pieces of rails can be blown up in a month. According to the plan of the TsSHPD, this should completely paralyze all enemy military transportation on the temporarily occupied Soviet territory. Ukrainian partisans will have to blow up approximately 85-90 thousand pieces of rails. I am dumbfounded. A simultaneous strike is necessary, but to blow up the rails?!

"So our whole plan is in vain?" Sokolov gets upset. - Simultaneous strike can be done with the help of mines! I add. "We won't discuss," Strokach

says. - According to Panteleimon Kondratievich, the idea of a "rail war" was approved in principle by Comrade Stalin. Sit down for plans and calculations,

comrades. I notice that blowing up the number of rails named by Strokach will require significantly more explosives than was planned to be used in sabotage. "There will be explosives,"

Strokach answers. - And the planes?

Sokolov is worried. — Additional
will they give sorties for the transfer of this explosive?

- Ponomarenko said that the planes are promised to us. - In a word, for business! Strokach says. - Get down to adjusting the plan, Vasily Fyodorovich. And you, Ilya Grigoryevich, immediately specify how many rails are in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, in general, what is the state of the railway industry there * * * I don't know if he lived Time does not wait. in the light of a person on the enemy. Hurry up. who had the opportunity to calmly do some business, without thinking about those who were postponed or waiting in line. Among my acquaintances such did not meet. Yes, and I myself had to keep in mind and do several things at once. The day after my conversation with Strokach, I went to the General Staff, to the Central Directorate of Military Communications. The request prepared by us, about the state of the railway economy in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, was accepted by a familiar colonel.

- What, are you also going to tear the rails in Ukraine? he inquired. "It's not enough for you, comrades, that the German himself distorts the canvas during the

retreat?" - Do not tighten, please, with a certificate. - Eh, what's the reference? You will receive a certificate on time ... From this, even a short conversation, a heavy residue on the soul. Indeed, we ourselves will have to restore the blown up rails. And then, what about the work deployed by the technical department? We have aimed people at improving special equipment, methods of sabotage, we generalize and disseminate the experience of the best partisan miners! The department has already prepared for printing brochures describing the design of some delayed-action mines and recommendations for their installation, prepared directives for the organization of sabotage services in detachments and formations, examines warehouses with mines, determines the suitability of electrochemical contactors for use in the summer, established contacts with some institutes Academy of Sciences of the USSR, with a number of special

institutes and design bureaus that are engaged in the manufacture of new explosives, the creation of new mine-blasting equipment! Is it all in vain? I go with my doubts to Strokach. - Continue to work as you have been working! - after listening

to me, says Strokach. - No one is going to abolish mines and fight with the help of

mines. We will foresee this struggle in the plan. Strokach's words and the decisive tone in which they are spoken are inspiring. In anticipation of a response to a request to the Main Directorate of Military

Communications, I again plunge into my usual business. Stepan Afanasyevich Balezin, the assistant to the commissioner of the GKO for science, was very helpful in those days. He does everything to ensure that the requests and requests of the UShPD technical department are fulfilled as soon as possible, and he has already delved into the tactics of guerrilla warfare, into the methods of performing some sabotage tasks, that he even clarifies our requests and himself makes proposals for the creation and improvement of existing equipment. And on the eve of May Day, the detachments of the disbanded VOSHON, who arrived from the Caucasus, require priority attention. Captain Chepak, who commanded the detachments, appeared at my place at the very beginning of the working day. The Moscow sky was frowning, on the lawns of Tverskoy Boulevard, on the withered, dirty last year's grass, skinny, spongy cakes of gray snow still lay here and there, the trunks and branches of linden trees after the night drizzle seemed especially black, dull, and Chepak looked like a vacationer: his face was tanned, his eyebrows burned out .

The captain reported that the echelons with detachments were moving slowly: they let oncoming trains with troops and equipment pass, several times they came under bombardment. I introduced Captain Chepak to General Strokach and Drozhzhin, We decided that the captain would head the special-purpose school of the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement, and the personnel of the detachments of the former VOSHON would partly join the new school, and partly be sent to partisan detachments and formations to train partisans in handling new equipment , to strengthen the sabotage services. Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain It was assumed that the Spanish comrades who were at the school would also continue to serve in the formations of the Ukrainian headquarters, although Strokach considered it necessary t

"Go there with Leonid Petrovich," Strokach ordered, "arrange. After the May holidays, when the weather became generous, gave Moscow the sun and pistachio greens of just bursting buds, Leonid Petrovich Drozhzhin, the head of the personnel department of the headquarters, and I went to the Comintern. Comrade Dimitrov received us. He recognized me, the conversation went confidential, friendly. We talked about the operations of saboteurs in the Caucasus, about the struggle of Ukrainian partisans, and Dimitrov spoke about Bulgarian partisans and underground fighters who, in the most difficult conditions, losing wonderful people, never stop fighting fascism for a minute. We talked about the Spanish comrades. Dimitrov said that several former Spanish Republican pilots had met in Moscow with the famous pilot A. S. Osipenko, commander of the air defense aviation, who fought in Spain. Osipenko decided to take the Spanish pilots with him. And they lived up to his hopes by taking part in repelling Nazi air raids.

- The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain has drawn attention to this fact, - said Dimitrov, - and considers it necessary to use Spanish volunteer soldiers either in their direct specialty, or to prepare for the upcoming struggle in Spain. I also think that this would be better. Yes, that was probably better. But the thought of the impending parting with the Spaniards, with these selflessly courageous, infinitely modest people, seemed unbearably bitter. The Spaniards were the first and most numerous foreigners who fought in the detachments of Soviet partisans, the first foreigners in the Red Army. Together we experienced the tragedy of defeat and the joy of victory. Wherever the path lay - near Khaen or Taganrog, near Huesca or Kharkov, near Cordoba or Kalinin - everywhere we walked shoulder to shoulder, endlessly believing in our neighbor ... Dimitrov noticed

my condition.

- You will continue the fight on one side of the front! - he said. - And the forces in the war must be used with maximum benefit! This is where the conversation ended. Soon all the Spanish volunteer soldiers were enrolled in the cadres of the Red Army. We said goodbye to veterans of the guerrilla war separately. We hugged until a crunch in the shoulders, realizing that we were parting for a long time, if not forever. Only one

from the veterans, Ramiles, proved in the Spanish Central Committee that he had become an experienced demolition miner, returned to me and soon flew behind enemy lines, to the formation of Nikolai Nikitovich Popudrenko, became his deputy for sabotage ... On the eve of the Kursk Bulge Soon after meeting with Dimitrov, I had to fly out on a business trip to the Voronezh and Central fronts. There they were preparing, having exhausted the enemy in a defensive battle on the Kursk Bulge, to go on a decisive offensive. The partisans and the guards miners of both fronts, before the start of active hostilities, had to inflict sensitive blows on the Belgorod-Kharkov and Belgorod-Sumy railways, use delayed-action mines on the main highways behind enemy lines. I had conversations with employees of the headquarters of the engineering troops of the Voronezh and Central Fronts, as well as with officers of the battalions of guards miners, shared my experience in using MZD and the secrets of the tactics of small groups of miners sent to the enemy rear. I mention this to emphasize that since the spring of 1943, especially in the period of preparation for the Battle of Kursk, engineering mines began to be used not only as defensive, but also as offensive weapons. And in Moscow, a new hasty task awaited; to acquaint the secretaries of a number of regional committees, partisan commanders and members of the so-called "organizing groups" sent by the UShPD mainly to the regions of the Right-Bank Ukraine to create new underground groups and new partisan formations with the latest mine-explosive equipment. Partisan commanders reacted differently to these activities. Hero of the Soviet Union V. M. Yaremchuk, who had twelve derailed enemy trains on his account, chuckled:

— Why don't we know how to make crashes? We already know! Having caught that enemy on the "bait", tai and go-di! Catching trains with a "fishing rod", that is, blowing them up with a string tied to a fuse check, from a shelter located fifty to a hundred meters from the railway track, was an extremely dangerous business, costing the lives of many partisans. However, Yaremchuk considered this method the most reliable, and did not believe in time bombs. After class, he dramatically changed his point of view. Flying away, took with him so many MZD,

how many he allowed to take on the plane, and subsequently successfully used them all to one. The head of the organizing group, the secretary of the Kamenetz-Podolsk regional committee, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR S. A. Oleksenko, an engineer by profession, on the contrary, from the very beginning, treated the new mines with great interest, studied them diligently and forced his comrades to study them diligently. He complained about only one thing: there are not enough mines, and it is not known how they will be delivered hundreds of kilometers behind enemy lines. Oleksenko's concerns were understandable. I also understood well that stocky, round-faced, forelocked lad who knocked on the door of my office on one of the warm May days: - Allow me, Comrade Colonel! - and

stretched out on the threshold. - Instructor-miner of the special school Voronko! - I'm hearing you. How can I be

useful?.. Sit down. The lad took off his cap, sat down: - I'm asking, Comrade Colonel. From a

group of cadets. - Continue. Visibly agitated, involuntarily interspersing Ukrainian words and expressions into Russian speech, my visitor said that there were seven of them: six guys and one girl, all were experienced saboteurs, one guy was a radio operator, could you send them to the enemy rear, to a detachment where Can you get a good job in the military? The interlocutor looked so young that I involuntarily smiled: - Do you also have a peaceful specialty? The boy blushed, "How so?" He was a builder before the war, he built

bridges. Well, he also studied at the Literary Institute. I write poetry, comrade

colonel.

Poet, then. How did he get into saboteurs? - Case.

On the first day of the war in our region, the safe with mobilization documents could not be opened. And then I turned up: a bridgeman, familiar with explosives. He opened the safe, and so it went. They sent me to study, then they sent me to the fascist rear, then I taught and transferred people myself... My comrades and I know how to make mines, Comrade Colonel! I pondered how to proceed. Voronko crumpled his cap: "Help, Comrade Colonel!" The war is not

over, but we are not asking for our rear!

- Fine. Wait. I called Strokach and asked to see us. After talking with the young man, Timofey Amvrosievich sent him into the corridor and spread his arms: - Poet, builder,

saboteur! Would you refuse such a thing? Where would his group be assigned, Ilya Grigorievich?

"Instructors are needed everywhere, Comrade

General. "Let's send some guys to Sidor Artemyevich!" This Voronko will not only blow up trains in raids, but also compose songs, write poems, and Kovpak people are worth poems, right? Thus was decided the fate of Platon Nikitich Voronko and the fate of his fighting friends. General Strokach was not mistaken. The youth fought bravely behind enemy lines. Platon Voronko wrote verses and poems about partisans that all the people know today. In those days, many volunteers came to the USHPD asking, even demanding, to be sent behind enemy lines. We could not satisfy all the requests, "but nevertheless, in the spring of the forty-third, the headquarters transferred one hundred and twenty well-trained miners to the enemy rear: sixty-seven flew as instructors, and fifty-three as commanders and staff workers. Then they were thrown into the enemy rear and radio operators, and cryptographers, and medical personnel. Is the rail war an absurdity? At the end of the first decade of May, we received a response to a request to the Central Directorate of Military Communications. We were informed that there are more than four million pieces of rails in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, the Nazis do not experience a shortage of them. The enemy is experiencing an acute shortage of steam locomotives; there are currently less than five thousand steam locomotives suitable for operation in the entire occupied territory of the USSR. Strokach was puzzled by these figures. He was finally convinced that our technical department was right: planned rails make up only two percent of their number in the occupied territory of the Ukrainian SSR, and these two percent will have to spend all the explosives that we can deliver to detachments and formations. And it is still unknown whether such a quantity of explosives will be delivered: in May we did not receive the promised number of aircraft, and in July we should expect a reduction in flights: summer nights are short!

“Ask the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement to see if it will provide additional planes!” Strokach ordered. — And prepare a certificate for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U. The Central Committee must be informed of the state of affairs. The technical department prepared a certificate for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U by May 23. From the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement they answered that they could allocate one additional plane to us in May.

Chapter 26 Strokach refuses rail war!

The ciphers that came to the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement became more disturbing day by day. Major punitive operations were being prepared against the partisans. In a number of places, the Nazis managed to push the partisans away from the railways, capture the landing sites they built for aircraft, and the sites of the partisan formations located far to the west became unattainable due to the reduction of night time and the lack of aircraft with additional fuel tanks. The one and only partisan airfield has been preserved, as before, it received aircraft. He was in the Lelchitsky district of the Polesye region. There, to the base of the partisan formation of A. N. Saburov, the partisans of Ukraine reached out to receive explosives, mines, weapons, ammunition and medicines. Meanwhile, due to non-flying weather and a shortage of aircraft, the material support of the partisans was delayed, the release of partisan formations into raids was postponed. This worried Strokach extremely. Therefore, already when developing a plan to undermine 87,000 pieces of rails, "recorded" for the partisans of Ukraine by the leadership of the TsShPD, Timofey Amvrosievich agreed with the proposal of the Technical Department to carry out mass undermining of rails only in combination with the widespread use of delayed action mines. Moreover, by mid-May, we had fully developed a mining system that excluded the use of more or less effective countermeasures by the enemy. I mentioned the certificate prepared for May 23 by the Technical Department at the direction of Strokach for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U. It spoke about the capabilities of Ukrainian partisans to disrupt the enemy's strategic transportation and indicated that with a lack of explosives, it would be more expedient to crash enemy trains, disable enemy trains, and not undermine the rails. The technical department proposed to undermine the rails solely for the purpose of masking the delivered mines, primarily the latest delayed-action mines. On the morning of May 30, Timofey Amvrosievich informed the deputies that the Central Committee of the CP(b)U

reviewed this certificate, carefully weighed all the pros and cons and agreed with our point of view.

"In other words, Ukrainian partisans will not take part in the so-called "rail war," Strokach summed up. We are starting a completely different war - a "war on rails." We will, as we intended, destroy enemy trains with the help of MIN. I was ordered to prepare for a flight with him behind enemy lines. Strokach wanted to personally bring the changes in the combat plan to each partisan commander and commissar, personally check the combat training of the partisans, and at the same time present awards to people. I had to control the training of miners, check the security of the formations with mine explosive equipment and the safety of this property.

- The decision was made extremely responsible, and it must be carried out with all responsibility! Timofei Amvrosievich said. Valentina Grizodubova... Strokach was late. The sunset was dying down, the time for departure was coming - the general was gone. It was completely dark, the stars were hatching, and only in the west, above the black notches of the distant forest, a whitish-green reflection of the past day glimmered in the gaps of the clouds - there was no Strokach! An officer on duty came from the commander of the aviation regiment of the

BC Grizodubova: - Comrade Colonel, the flight is canceled: by dawn, the partisans cannot reach! Strokach's adjutant flying with us, liaison officers, and mine-explosive instructors surrounded us in a tight ring, waiting for my

decision. "We will wait for Timofey Amvrosievich," I say. The officer shrugs and leaves. I'm considering whether to follow him, but then I hear the sound of a car moving at high speed, the noise approaches, grows to the limit, subsides, a screech of brakes is heard. The sharp slam of the door. Strokach appears from the darkness with a quick step: - You are not on

the plane yet?! "The flight

is cancelled, Comrade General. Late. How is it "cancelled"? What does "late" mean? — Where is

Grizodubova? Let's go to her, Ilya Grigorievich! Valentina Stepanovna Grizodubova, high-browed, with wide flying eyebrows, listened to Strokach sympathetically.

"No, no, of course you can fly," she said. "Just have to change the route. Fly through Lipetsk, Comrade General. There, the night is forty minutes longer, and the path through the enemy rear from there is shorter. But Strokach protested:

— Have mercy, Valentina Stepanovna, dear comrade colonel! After all, Lipetsk is five hundred kilometers away, if not more.

"Five," Grizodubova agreed. - Nothing. I told you: win when flying behind enemy lines.

- But you will have to fly out of Lipetsk tomorrow! - By itself. "No,"

said Strokach. - No tomorrow. The weather can turn bad, something else will happen, but every day counts. We must fly today. Immediately! And Grizodubova conceded. She hesitated, but conceded: — Be your way. Across the front line,

the transport plane was gaining altitude with a roar and a roar. Twilight was behind. Round rivets on the mighty gray wing of the car became visible. Well, it happened, after a long break, I'm heading behind enemy lines again! The excitement that possessed me was, probably; other than the excitement of the young adjutant Timofei Amvrosievich and the communications officers of the headquarters. They could be worried about the unusualness of the situation, the sense of danger, the need to test and show themselves. A long time ago, near Villanuevo del Cordova, I felt something similar. Now the brain was feverishly checking whether any, even the smallest, mistake had been made in planning the upcoming "war on rails." I thought, estimated, checked the calculations in my mind - I did not find any errors. There was no reason to doubt the intention of the operation itself. Until now, we could only dream of the possibility of a massive strike on the enemy's communications, of mass derailments of enemy trains, and the destruction of the enemy's rolling stock. Now a massive blow is a reality. A sufficient number of the most modern mines have appeared, and the people who have risen to fight the invaders receive them! The Nazis cannot avoid catastrophe! They reached the front line at a considerable height: an additional tank of gasoline installed in the fuselage of the car seemed to be boiling, releasing gasoline vapors. And below, in the darkness that enveloped the earth, a soundless morse of light raged: pinkish, scarlet, golden dashes and

points. If you didn't know that these were gun flashes and shell explosions! .. Suddenly, to the left of the aircraft, "lanterns" — enemy illuminating rockets — lit up and hovered. Almost at the same time, expanding pillars of trembling light, the rays of fascist searchlights, reared up, began to wander in the night. We approached, groped, aimed ... I hoped that we would slip through. Later, Strokach admitted that he hoped so. Didn't skip. It became light in the fuselage, as if a chandelier of five hundred candles had been lit. The metal ribs of aircraft structures, the faces and figures of people closely seated on the side benches stood out sharply, distinctly from the darkness. Some closed their eyes, some covered their eyes with their sleeves. Close explosions of anti-aircraft shells flashed in the portholes. In a moment of mortal danger, there is nothing worse than passive waiting. But there was nothing left for us, the passengers, but such waiting. We could only hope for the pilots, and not for ourselves! The commander of the ship, Captain Slepov, abruptly threw the car down. The benches rushed out from under us, we had to cling to the metal, each other. Not everyone held out, someone fell, rolled to the cockpit. And the plane roared and rushed down, and my ears ached unbearably. It became dark again in the fuselage, there was no more sparkle in the windows, and the plane did not fall, on the contrary, its roar became more even. It was no longer required to exert strength to stay on the bench. It's gone! Slepov switched to level flight, darkness again below: the terrible Morse code had disappeared, which means that the front line was far behind! He touched Strokach on the shoulder and invited him to look out the porthole. What is this? Vibrating red and yellow dots appear, joining into squares, into envelopes, into letters. Other figures at our approach Go out, others move, new ones flash to replace the extinguished ones. This is what partisan fires-signals look like from an airplane! However, it is quite possible that other bonfires were lit by fascist punishers who are trying to trap inexperienced pilots. Oh well! This SS number will not work with ours! After what I experienced, yes, it seems, all the other passengers completely trust Captain Slepov and his assistants. In addition, endless partisan bonfires amuse: the fascist rear is fragile, the scope of the people's struggle against the invaders is great! People are waiting, through the noise of engines one can hear jokes and laughter. Enough laughter and jokes

briefly. The short June night ended, and we all walked and walked over Polissya. Strokach glanced at his watch. According to calculations, it is high time to fly to Saburov! Have you got lost! Then bad business. In daylight, the lonely, defenseless Li-2 is a godsend for enemy fighters! In the first case of direct danger, you will have to land, but where? It became quite light. The sun is about to appear... No one spoke, no one smiled. Everyone was staring intently at the terrain floating under the plane. And the conditional landing marks were finally opened to us. I don't remember who noticed them first. I remember, however, that along with the relief I felt tired. A push, another, the plane gently shakes, sways, the bright grass in the window stops running to the tail of the car, stops. The fading whistle of propellers is heard. The co-pilot passes us, bending down, pulls back the door, attaches an iron ladder:

"You can go out, Comrade General!" In the opening of the door it pours light, the fresh smell of the morning earth, the gentle noise of foliage. In front of us is a vast field. On the edge of the clearing there is a birch forest, a hut with a smoking chimney, with a fenced perch and a goat tied to a peg, indifferent to the plane. The partisans flee from the birch forest. Who is in a tunic, who is in a German trophy jacket, who is in a padded jacket. A strong, fair-haired fighter in a jacket, in green breeches, tarpaulin boots and a Kubanka hat famously salutes Strokach: - Company commander Smirnov!

Sent to meet and escort! The command is heard: "Airplane to the shelter!" She slowly but obediently crawls in the opposite direction from the hut, under the canopy of sprawling, mighty oaks. The grass, crushed by the plane, is teddyed and lifted, and now there is no plane, no airfield, only a large meadow, and the hut of some forester, and a goat ... Strokach and I were given horses, our companions settled down on

carts.

— How far is the base? Strokach asked the owner of the Kubanka. "We'll get there in an hour and a half, Comrade General!" The road led either through the forest or through the field. The trees rustled serenely with their young foliage, from afar, as if from a simple-hearted childhood, the fortune-telling of a cuckoo was heard, among the copper trunks of pines flowed the blue silver of the river Uborti, swayed, splashed rainbows into the eyes of a sloppy juicy

grass, weeds stuck out in the fields, and rarely, rarely looked for a look among the weeds and burdock, a skinny strip of grain. We entered the burned village. On the sides of the grassy street there are only yards and sooty chimneys. The forehead of the surviving stove is like a black mouth open in a scream.

"Punishers," the convo commander explained sparingly. Few managed to escape. We stopped at a well log house, blue from old age. They drank in turn from a wooden, iron-bound bucket. A wet rusty chain jingled. My turn has come. He threw back the bucket, drank, and when he lowered the bucket, he saw a boy standing next to him. The boy is ten years old. He is barefoot, dressed in a long tattered shirt. He looks at me, exposing his swollen stomach, holding a twig in his thin hand. On a bony face, under matted, uncut hair, blue eyes that had not forgotten anything ... I felt guilty before him. - Military uncle! the boy suddenly said in a timid voice. - Give me an asterisk, military uncle! I hastily

found a spare sprocket for shoulder straps, handed it to the boy. He grabbed the asterisk and skipped away ...

Chapter 27 At Saburov

Stopped several times by partisan patrols, we approached Saburov's headquarters. Dug-outs hunched over among the trees, ropes with clothes hung out to dry were stretched, there was a smell of smoke, people's voices were heard. In the gaps in the trunks, a clearing with a large log house lit up under the early sun. There are people in the clearing in front of the house. From a distance I recognize Demyan Sergeevich Korotchenko, Alexei Fedorovich Fedorov, Sidor Artemyevich Kovpak, Stepan Antonovich Oleksenko. A portly man in a general's uniform separates from the group of those who meet them and goes towards them. Apparently, Saburov, whom I had not met before. We dismount. Saburov begins his report to Timofei Amvrosievich. After listening to the report, Strokach hugs Saburov, and the audience has already approached us, and it seems there will be no end to hugs and handshakes. I look around. The commanders are wearing general or officer uniforms with field epaulettes, their faces are cheerful, their movements and voices are confident. These are not exhausted people driven into forests and tracts, these are powerful owners of their land! To see this, it was worth going through any grief and failure. Breakfast was expected at Saburov's. The tables were right on the clearing. Strokach looked at the food and only spread his hands:

- I see, you do not live by cards! Where does it come from? "We requisition from the enemy, exchange in the villages for salt and kerosene," Saburov replied. — Please, comrades! At the table, no, no, and yes, I looked at the sunburnt black-moustached commissar Semyon Vasilyevich Rudnev sitting obliquely. Among my acquaintances, there was no person with such a surname, with such a name, patronymic, but I could not get rid of the feeling that I had met Rudnev before, and had met more than once, only where and when? It seems that Rudnev was also looking at me, trying to remember something. I seized the moment, leaned over to the commissar:

- Semyon Vasilievich, excuse me, have we met before? Rudnev touched his mustache with his palm:

- You see, I once studied with an instructor who bore the surname Grigoriev ... And immediately everything fell into place! Well, of course, Kyiv, thirty-third year, partisan school! I taught there, the surname Grigoriev was one of my then pseudonyms!

What was your last name ten years ago? In Kyiv? —
I laughed, - Grigoriev did not have a listener Rudnev!

- Ilya Grigorievich, you ?! - Rudnev even got up from his seat. - That's what I look at, like you, but they say - Starinov, and I don't understand, am I mistaken or again a conspiracy ?! We shook hands with each other.

- What, it turns out, old acquaintances? Strokach called out. -
Still some old, Timofei Amvrosievich! - Rudnev responded. It is embarrassing to indulge in personal memories among unfamiliar people.
"You'll be in our
formation, then we'll talk," suggested Rudnev.

* * *

The tablecloth was removed, the smokers struck matches and lighters, and there was a smell of tobacco smoke. Saburov gave way to Demyan Sergeevich Korotchenko at the end of the table. He knocked on the table knuckles: - We start

the meeting, comrades! Having said that the country and the people are living on the eve of extraordinary events at the front, Korotchenko explained "(Strategic situation: the Nazi command is preparing a strike in the area of the Kursk ledge, the Soviet troops will have to wear down the enemy and go on a decisive offensive. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, Comrade Stalin personally demand from the partisans to intensify. The Ukrainian partisans are to strike at the railways located in the rear of the fascist army group "South". The capacity of the roads should be reduced to zero. This will facilitate the task of the regular troops of the Red Army. - Taking into account the requirements of the moment, the Central Committee of the

Party "Ukraine and the Ukrainian Headquarters of the partisan movement revised the summer plan of combat activities, made changes and clarifications to it," said Korotchenko. "Chief of Staff General Strokach will report on them in more detail. The changes made to the plan of summer hostilities were very serious."

Kovpak was relieved of the tasks of decommissioning the railway junctions of Zhmerinka, Kazatin and Fastov, he was ordered to go to the Chernivtsi region to act on local communications and organize the struggle in Carpathian Ukraine. To influence the railway junctions of Zhmerinka, Kazatin and Fastov, and in addition to the railway junctions of Korosten, Shepetovka and Kyiv, the connection of Saburov, whose transition to the Stanislav region was canceled, was now supposed to be affected. S. F. Malikov's formation was ordered to focus its efforts on disrupting the work of the railway junctions of Berdichev and Zhytomyr, M. I. Naumov's formation was to carry out a raid on the southern parts of the Zhytomyr, Kiev and northern parts of the Kirovograd regions instead of a raid on the Chernivtsi region, disrupting the work of the iron railroad with the partisans there. the Fastov-Znamenka road, and the formation of Ya. I. Melnik-D.T. Burchenko, which had previously targeted the Zdolbutov-Polonnoe railway, was ordered to raid the Vinnitsa region, strike at the railways of the Zhmerinsky and Kazatinsky nodes. The tasks of the formations of A.F. Fedorov, I.F. Fedorov and V.A. Begma remained the same. The partisans of Aleksey Fedorovich Fedorov had to disrupt the work of the railway junctions of Kovel, Lutsk and Rovno, and the partisans of Ivan Filippovich Fedorov and Vasily Andreevich Begma had to disrupt the work of the railway junctions of Rovno, Zdolbunov and Sarn. They listened to Strokach, sometimes throwing quick glances at him and at each other. Kovpak, as always, squinted, looking sideways at Vershigora, then at Rudnev; Saburov, with his arms folded across his chest, looked at some point on the table top; The miller half-closed his eyes... Apparently, something remained unclear, especially since it was perceived by ear, and something caused resistance. Saburov, for example, immediately drew the attention of Korotchenko and Strokach to the fact that he would have to break up the formation into small detachments. These detachments will operate far from each other, it will be difficult to supply them, and they will not be able to resist the enemy in direct combat. It seemed to me that Timofei Amvrosievich

was expecting such an objection. The plan is an order! he said firmly. - We will talk with the command of each unit separately about how best to carry it out. Then we'll figure everything out, Nikolai Alexandrovich. Any questions, comrades? There were questions, of course. On

how many weapons and explosives can still be counted? Are there specific dates for the start of operations for each connection? Will they send more radio operators? Strokach answered some questions, promised to answer others later, having been in the formations. With this, the meeting closed. True, the partisan commanders and commissars did not leave immediately, but I was not present at informal conversations: they invited me to classes with the Saburov miners. Among the new students there were quite a few elderly people: it turns out that not only young people aspired to become saboteurs! But since these were still elderly people, besides peasants, who hardly had anything other than educational program behind them, I reduced the theoretical part of the classes and increased the practical one. I believed that by holding a mine in their hands, having learned to set it for one or another period of deceleration in practice, and then repeating the learned techniques many times, people will be able to act without knowing the laws of physics and chemistry. I had no illusions about how firmly beginners would learn the material, but I completely relied on Saburov's instructors; They will do what I can't. Moreover, the instructors were S.P. Mineev, well known to the reader, and Klava Mineeva, who became his wife, the same Klavochka from the match factory, who was eager to join the partisans back in forty-one! Classes ended in complete darkness, when it was no longer possible to distinguish anything. At Kovpak The next day was spent at the Kovpak team, camped three or four kilometers from the Saburov compound. At the solemn formation of the first battalion, or, as it was usually called, the Putivl detachment, Strokach presented orders and medals to the "Partisan of the Patriotic War" to three hundred Kovpak people. Then I checked the connection. Later, Korotchenko, Strokach, Kovpak, Rudnev, Vershigora, the commanders and commissars of the Kovpak detachments began a meeting, and I checked how the mine-blasting equipment was stored in the unit, how the instructors work, how dozens of new miners learn their lessons. He also held a lesson with instructors, showed some of the latest demolition equipment. At dinner, Kovpak asked if I was satisfied with the miners. He replied that he was satisfied.

“Have you heard, Timofei Amvrosievich? Kovpak raised his finger. — Your deputy is pleased, but you don't give us mines or tolus.

How can we not? Dali, Sidor Artemyevitch! -
Few. -

Distributed fairly. - And who

said that it was not fair? Kovpak frowned. — Neither! I'm saying that it's not enough! It was only late in the evening that Rudnev and I managed to be alone. They sat in the night forest on the trunk of a fallen tree, recalled pre-war Kyiv, mutual acquaintances, talked about how they once prepared for a guerrilla war. Rudnev said that he was fighting together with his son, whose name is Radiy. The boy is brave, even too much, maybe because he does not want and does not dare to drop the authority of his father. Semyon Vasilyevich's voice sounded hoarse; last fall, an enemy fragment scratched his throat, touched his vocal cords. I asked Voronko's group. Rudnev said that Platon Voronko himself, and Vareykin, and Lira Nikolskaya, and Sasha Kuznetsov, and the rest of the guys in the group came to the court, trained the miners, trained more than a hundred people, and now they left on a mission: they can't wait to derail the enemy

echelon. - I'm worried that the raid will run out of mines and "explosives," Rudnev confessed. - After all, we will be out of reach of aviation.

"Only if the front doesn't move west, Semyon Vasilevich. And he will move! Strokach called to me:

- Ilya Grigorievich, please come to me! There is

a business. - Yes Yes. I'm going. Rudnev and I wished each other good night and parted ways. Later, laying down on a heap of fragrant hay in a parachute silk tent, I unexpectedly and bitterly thought that Rudnev and I had not pronounced the names of some former acquaintances who were repressed in the mid-thirties. This thought prevented me from falling asleep for a long time, and I could hear how the forest rustled, how sentries were walking and someone was rustling close to the canopy, either a mouse or a nocturnal beetle. At Fedorov Early in the morning, Korotchenko, Strokach, their adjutants and liaison officers went to the formation of Alexei Fedorovich Fedorov: the road was not close, seventeen kilometers, they wanted to get to Fedorov before the onset of heat. I couldn't go with everyone else: among the batch of chemical fuses delivered by the last plane, faulty ones were found, it was necessary to figure out what had happened. Only at the eleventh hour was it possible to cope with this matter, and in a beautiful,

the village of Borovoye, which is widely spread over Uboort, I got to the headquarters of the partisan formation of Alexei Fedorovich Fedorov only at one o'clock in the afternoon. Having fed and allowed to rest from the road, Alexey Fedorovich suggested going to the forest, to the partisan training ground. I chuckled inwardly. The nearest railway line ran thirty-five kilometers from Borovoe, what kind of "polygon" is that? But I knew that the unit commander likes to play pranks on people, being annoyed if the prank fails, and played

along with him: - Of course, to the training ground. First of all - to the landfill! They didn't go long. On the next forest clearing opened to my eyes ... Unthinkable! Railroad embankment! With sleepers. With rails. With ballast. The embankment did not lead anywhere, it began and ended in a clearing, its length was small - twenty-five - thirty meters, but it existed! And over the gleaming rails, over the sleepers black from fuel oil, partisan miners were swarming and I could see the tall, thin, well-known figure of my former chief of finance, now captain, Fedorov's deputy for sabotage Alexei Semenovich Yegorov! I was stunned. After all, it was necessary to extract and deliver sand here, to carry rails and sleepers for tens of kilometers and to be in time in a short time ...

Fedorov's voice behind him sounded with familiar sly intonations: - Of course, not the ring near Moscow, we understand, but at least something

then ... And I had to confess:

"I've taken yours again, Alexey Fyodorovich!" I thought you were playing... Thank you. The thought flashed that the training ground can be used to train miners from other compounds.

"I don't mind," said Fedorov. Especially since we're leaving in two days. We stayed at the range for three hours. "I asked Yegorov about the details of the construction of the embankment, made sure that all the miners, without exception, perfectly mastered the tactical and technical data of the new mines, and then I saw with my own eyes how the captain's students work. They worked quickly, dexterously, it was impossible to detect the installed mines. I especially remember former Moscow student Volodya Pavlov."

How many people have been trained? - I asked.

"Three hundred and twelve," Yegorov answered calmly, as if talking about something ordinary. Returning to Borovoye, I immediately spoke to Strokach

about the need to collect miners from other compounds at the Fedorov test site.

- Yes, they have a real partisan academy here! Timofey Amvrosievich agreed. "We did a great job, there is a lot to learn. Only it's too late. And he said that information had been received about the concentration of significant forces of regular troops and punishers by the Nazi command in the areas of Mozyr, Yelsk, Ovruch, Olevsk and Petrikov. "The number

of enemy units is close to sixty thousand," said Strokach. - Apparently, a major punitive operation against the formations gathered here is planned. We need to send them on raids as soon as possible, Ilya Grigoryevich. The enemy must not be allowed to draw the partisans into defensive battles. The message changed things. It only remained to be regretted that the unique training ground created by the Fedorovites behind enemy lines was not used to its full capacity. A day later, the formations of Fedorov and Kovpak went on a raid. All Borovoe poured out to see off the Fedorovites. I was agitated by the farewell to Rudnev. "I didn't manage to talk as I wanted,"

Semyon Vasilyevich said with regret, "I changed my mind so much, it hurt so much. What now? Apparently, we'll talk after the war. And stretched out his hands:

- Let's hug, Ilya Grigorievich! We hugged. An hour later, the Kovpak people set off on the road. I didn't see Rudnev again... At Begma's. Thirty kilometers of forest roads were overcome only in the evening. The partisans ate. Music sounded throughout the camp: there is an accordion, there is a violin, there are harmonicas.

- Not a connection, but a philharmonic! Strokach joked. Have fun, Vasily Andreevich! "We don't

complain, we don't complain," Begma replied in a tone, "People need to have a cultural rest. The coming day was similar to the previous ones: awards were presented to the partisans, a meeting with the commanders and commissars of the detachments that were part of the Begma unit, a review of mine-explosive equipment, checking the work of instructors and trained miners. Strokach decided to return to the airfield area at night. Tired, we drove slowly. Suddenly crunched in

side of the branch: someone was moving away from the road, breaking through the thicket. A young liaison officer drove closer, coughed nervously:

- In such darkness, comrade general, you know, even a poor ambush, two or three bursts of machine guns ... - Well,

what an ambush! Strokach interrupted softly. - It was we who disturbed the beast, so we went to crack deadwood. What an ambush can be in a partisan region. And affectionately, soothingly patted A few days later, on the neck, shearing of Strokach, I left the partisan region in *** the ears of a horse. By order order to return to Moscow affairs and concerns. It was not possible to wait for all formations and detachments to enter the raid. But I flew away reassured and full of hope: people received about thirty tons of tol, more than five thousand mines of a new design, a sufficient number of fuses, fuses, contactors, fuse and detonating cord, in each connection there were no longer dozens, but hundreds of well-trained miners. You could start!

Chapter 28 Guerrilla attacks on the enemy

Above Tverskoy Boulevard, above Brenny and Gnezdnikovsky, the dense spirit of blooming lindens floated. Reports from the Sovinformburo talked about battles of local importance, about the search for scouts and artillery duels. It was felt: fierce battles were just around the corner ... Gathering in the mornings in Strokach's office, senior staff officers looked with hope at the head of communications, Lieutenant Colonel E. M. Kosovsky. He kept silent. Detachments and formations were still only advancing to the areas designated for their operations. The first to report on the fulfillment of the order was A.F. Fedorov. It happened on June 29th. Four days later, Alexey Fedorovich radioed that a sabotage plan had been developed for each of the five detachments of the formation, and they were sent to the places of future sabotage. We knew it; on each section of the railway, saddled by one or another detachment, Fedorov's miners will install more than 30 minutes of delayed action of the latest design (MZD-5) with different deceleration times. All non-removable. To protect these complex mines, others will be placed, exploding at the first touch of an enemy sapper's probe. And to disguise the MZD-5, the partisans will undermine individual echelons with instant mines. Will the enemy be able to oppose something to such a system? Will he be able to use the roads of the Kovel iron junction? Only time could give an answer. Two days later, on July 5, the Battle of Kursk began. The evening message from the Soviet Information Bureau was listened to in Strokach's office. It was said that if we had managed to provide the partisans with mines and explosives at least in May, the enemy would certainly not have had time to carry out all the necessary transportation, he would have been forced to delay the offensive, and this would have created fatal difficulties for the Nazis. I remember that I even tried to prove that it was possible to paralyze all the railways behind enemy lines back in 1942. He even cited hastily made calculations, where he pointed out the enormous

possibilities min.

"Your commitment to mines is known, Ilya Grigoryevich," Strokach said in a friendly tone. "Perhaps you are right. But let's be realistic. Now we need to think not about what could happen, but about the fact that all formations and detachments, the entire underground, as soon as possible, begin to destroy the enemy echelons. And he ordered Sokolov to prepare the text of radiograms to the formations that were late in reaching the areas of operations, to demand to speed up the movement in order to begin sabotage on all the railways listed in the plan in the coming days. Two more days passed. On the night of July 8, A.F. Fedorov reported the explosion of the first MZD-5. She worked on the afternoon of July 7 on the stretch Povursk - Manevichi. The enemy train with tanks and ammunition went downhill. At the same time, radio messages began to arrive from Kovpak, Naumov, Malik, Melnik, I.F. Fedorov and other formation commanders about the continuation of raids, about reaching designated areas, about establishing contact with local partisans, about the beginning of mining. How to convey our then state? The grandiose battle in the area of the Kursk ledge continued. At the cost of colossal losses, the enemy managed to move forward, albeit slowly, and we well understood what it took to delay the enemy. On the Central and Voronezh fronts, not hundreds and thousands, but hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers fought selflessly, died, bled from wounds. They stood to the death. Help! Help them as soon as possible! And in the deep rear of the fascist troops, who have staked on the Battle of Kursk, begins a partisan operation unprecedented in the history of world wars to massively disable the largest railway junctions. If it is possible to carry it out, railway traffic in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine will stop, the enemy will lose hundreds of steam locomotives, his fighting armies will not receive the required number of human reinforcements, or military equipment, or ammunition, or food. And you involuntarily envy those who are now hundreds of kilometers from Moscow, from us, at the appointed hour, unseen enters the highways, with precise, habitual movements takes out soil or ballast, dexterously sets formidable mines and hides as imperceptibly as he appeared. You are envious, because the success of the planned operation now depends to a large extent on such invisible men - ordinary miners! .. In the critical days of the Battle of Kursk, when in

In the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau, the names Greznoye, Prokhorovka, Rzhavets and Maslova Pristan rumbled with tank tracks, Colonel Sokolov came into my room:

- There is news. I talked with comrades from the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement. They gave the order to start a "rail war". The news was out of the ordinary! This means that the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement managed to stock up on a huge amount of explosives and deliver it to the partisans that he led! I greedily questioned Vasily Fedorovich about the details. But he only knew that the partisans of Belarus, the partisans of the Leningrad, Smolensk and partially Oryol regions were involved in the rail war. Their number is almost one hundred thousand people, the upcoming operation is divided into three stages. Each stage will last from fifteen to thirty days. According to those with whom Sokolov spoke, in the first fifteen days almost all the railway tracks in the rear of the fascist army group "Center" should be destroyed. I asked if the Central Headquarters had plans to blow up enemy trains with mines.

- There was no talk about it. It seems that everything is thrown to undermine the rails. They want to stun the Germans and inspire the people!

- We wish the Belarusian partisans success, Vasily Fedorovich! - We wish! The results of the

summer 1943 activity of the Ukrainian partisans Events at the front, having reached a critical point, developed rapidly. The Bryansk and Western fronts went on the offensive on July 12, broke through the enemy's defenses in depth and moved towards Orel. The Hitlerite command was forced to throw against the advancing troops of the Bryansk and Western Fronts part of their troops operating against the Central Front. The Central Front immediately went over to the offensive. And then the enemy began to withdraw to Belgorod, even those armies that two days ago rushed furiously to Kursk. Hitler's operation "Citadel" has suffered a complete collapse! In those unforgettable days, the Central Committee of the CP(b)U adopted a resolution "On the state and further development of partisan struggle in Ukraine." The decision again and in all categorical terms indicated that

The most important task of the Ukrainian partisans is to disrupt the enemy's railway transportation by destroying his echelons with troops, equipment, fuels and lubricants, ammunition and food. The resolution was transmitted by radio to all detachments and formations, to all Ukrainian underground workers who had walkie-talkies. And the Ukrainian land already in those days literally exploded under the feet of the invaders, under the tracks of their tanks, under the wheels of their trains! Starting from July 10-11, radio messages about the destroyed echelons and blown up bridges began to be received by the radio station of the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement daily. In July, most often they came from Alexei Fedorovich Fedorov. From July 7 to August 1, 65 enemy echelons were blown up on delayed-action mines set by the Fedorovites around Kovel. In the past, such a number of connections could undermine only sixteen months, almost a year and a half! But that didn't end there either. From August 1 to August 10, another 58 fascist echelons flew down a slope, venturing to move along the lines of the Kovel railway junction! The enemy did not expect such a blow. Powerless to prevent explosions in the Kovel-Sarny and Kovel-Brest sections, he tried to advance the trains along the Brest-Pinsk line. Fedorov, anticipating the attempt of the Nazis, sent a group of miners to the Brest-Pinsk road. With the help of Belarusian partisans based in the zone of the Dnieper-Bug Canal, Fedorov's miners laid 40 MZD-5. The explosions of these mines forced the enemy to throw an entire division formed from the traitors of the Soviet Motherland to guard the road. The renegades dug trenches on both sides of the railway track, sat down in them, established a round-the-clock patrol of the track, but the trenches and patrols were not able to neutralize delayed-action mines, the explosions continued. The enraged Nazis suspected their accomplices of assisting the partisans, the division was disbanded, the traitors were driven into concentration camps, and an SS battalion was sent to replace them. But no battalion, due to its small number, to provide

permanent and reliable protection of a significant section of the track is not capable. The partisans got a good opportunity to lay new mines, and Aleksey Fedorovich Fedorov got the opportunity to report on August 14 to our headquarters that "the Kovel railways -

Sarny, Kovel - Brest, Kobrin - Pinsk are completely paralyzed. "The significance of the actions of the formation of A.F. Fedorov in July - August 1943 for disrupting enemy transportation and the further course of the war on enemy communications was immediately assessed. On behalf of T. D. Strokach I wrote to Alexei Fedorovich: "Your July and August successes opened a new milestone in influencing the enemy's railway communications. Your connection for the first time in the history of the world dealt such powerful blows to heavily guarded communications of the enemy. Suffice it to cite at least such facts that in August one of your formations derailed more trains than all the partisan detachments of Ukraine during the months of May and June. In the defeat of the enemy and his expulsion from the Left Bank of Ukraine, of course, one of the major factors is the actual closure by you of such important highways as Brest-Rovno, Brest-Pinsk and Kovel-Sarny ... In the near future we will be able to prove that in reality your the successes were greater than you reported in your reports. It is already clear from the testimonies of the prisoners that in order to transfer troops from Hamburg to Kharkov (the enemy) had to use the Romanian road, that is, to extend the path by another thousand kilometers. "Taking into account the experience of A.F. Fedorov, the head of the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement demanded, so that in all large formations certain sections of the railways were assigned to the detachments for mining with delayed mines. In particular, A. N. Saburov was ordered to assign to the detachments the sections of Sarny - Luninets, Sarny - Korosten, Korosten - Zhitomir and Ovruch - Korosten. The result had an effect quickly If in July the sabotage groups of the formations of Saburov and Malikov committed only episodic sabotage in the Sarny-Korosten-Novgorod-Volynsky sectors, then in August they destroyed forty-one enemy echelons only in the Sarny-Korosten sector. which was also under the continuous influence of the detachments of A.F. Fedorov, was also put out of action. Then came the turn of highways passing south. In July and August, the partisans derailed two hundred enemy trains there. In particular, Platon Voronko distinguished himself by blowing up the bridge over the Gnezdechna River. At that time we did not

knew, of course, that already on August 26, the commander of the operational rear area of the Army Group South reported to Berlin that "the constantly growing number of sabotage committed on the railways leads to an emergency situation in the entire transport situation and a catastrophic situation with the supply of troops." But we guessed that this was the case. And the mood of the staff of the headquarters was upbeat. On the evening of August 5, the dark metropolitan sky blossomed with rainbow fireworks. From volleys of guns, the earth trembled and glass rang. Moscow saluted the troops that had liberated Orel and Belgorod. It was the first salute in the war. The second thundered and shone on August 23. Coming out onto the central alley of Tverskoy Boulevard, mingling with the inhabitants of the surrounding houses, we felt how the gun salvos shook the ground, watched how scarlet, green, purple, orange lights scattered over the lindens and buildings, glorifying the liberators of Kharkov. Fireworks pushed aside the shadows of trees and buildings, brightened upturned faces: children's, thin and enthusiastic, middle-aged, with tears of joy and grief. Partisan formations were not saluted then. But we thought that the salute was thundering and

in their honor.

Chapter 29

In the midst of hostilities by Ukrainian partisans on the enemy's communications, in the last days of August forty-three, Strokach announced that a decision had been made to move the government of Ukraine to Kharkov and relocate the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement there.

"Since you led the mining of objects in Kharkov, you should be the first to go there," Strokach told me. "Organize to search for enemy mines in buildings where government offices can be located, and at the same time take care of the premises for us. Formed in a matter of days, the UShPD task force left for Kharkiv on September 3. They traveled in five trucks. Strokach allocated a pickup truck to my disposal. The first traces of fierce battles appeared near Orel. The eagle was badly hurt. Other corners of the city could not be recognized. We made a short stop to feed the people, refuel and pour water into the radiators. I took the opportunity, began to ask local residents about how the invaders lived in Orel. People said that soon after the capture of the city, the fascist officers, located in the Kommunal Hotel, flew into the air from the explosion of some large mine. They said that the warehouses and garages of the occupiers were constantly on fire, trains were undermined, patrols were killed by shots from unknown persons, leaflets appeared on the walls every now and then, telling about the situation on the fronts, calling for the destruction of the invaders and traitors. By the handwriting of the saboteurs, I recognized the "Oryol firefighters" - underground workers and partisans trained in the local "school of firefighters" in the summer and autumn of the forty-first year. Behind Orel, the battlefields on the Kursk Bulge opened up. We passed them in the evening. Everywhere, as far as the eye could see, flooded, as with blood, by the crimson light of the sunset, among the zigzags of trenches, funnels, collapsed dugouts - forever frozen "tigers", "panthers" and "Ferdinands" mixed with our native thirty-fours ... The next day we arrived in Kharkov.

The results of radiomin explosions Back in Moscow, I thought about what awaits me in the city. And the closer they got, the stronger the excitement became. The experiences associated with the mining of Kharkov and its environs, all the old, long, seemingly forgotten anxieties came to life, took possession of the whole being ... The silhouette of the city has changed: against the backdrop of sunset, I did not see many factory chimneys. The first destroyed buildings have already appeared in the suburbs. Destroyed houses, completely burned-out boxes of buildings came across in the city. Funnels gaped in the streets. Lampposts and poles of tram lines lay here and there on the ground, entangled in broken wires. Broken sidewalks, shop windows without glass, trampled public gardens, broken or burnt trees - everything said that the fighting had been going on here quite recently. Yet many buildings stood unscathed. This testified to the rapid withdrawal of the enemy, to the retreat, which he did not count on. The next morning I went to the Kharkov City Committee to introduce myself, report on the assignment and get help from the party and Soviet bodies. However, on the way I turned onto Dzerzhinsky Street. I wanted to see with my own eyes what happened to the mansion, number 17. Dzerzhinsky Street did not suffer much. Only in the place of the mansion, memorable for the forty-first year, a huge oblong hole filled with water gaped. Around the pit are white-pink ledges of the foundation, heaps of brick blocks, a passenger car flattened by blocks, charred, flattened trunks of dead chestnuts. In a neighboring house (number 15 was preserved on an enameled tin plate), I found witnesses to what happened on the night of November 14 forty-one. They were mother and daughter - Anna Grigorievna and Valentina Fedoseevna Berenda. They said that after the October holidays, a fascist general settled in house 17, like the biggest enemy boss. A week later, Anna Grigorievna and Valentina Fedoseevna woke up from a terrible shock and thunder. Outside the window, it was burning, pounding, as if stones were falling from the sky, dishes rolled out of the collapsed stand, scattered into pieces and splinters. The women ran out into the yard. The mansion seemed to have sunk into the ground. A cloud of dust hung over the spot where he stood and over the garden, in the faint light of the beginning fire. It smelled of burning and sour. Something darkened on the fence boards and on the neighboring roof. Then they already saw: to the neighbor's

the remnants of a piano were thrown over the roof, and shreds of uniforms were thrown on the fence ... A siren howled, fascist motorcyclists rushed in, trucks with soldiers rolled in, the Nazis cordoned off the former mansion, rushed to put out the fire. They extinguished the fire, but apparently they did not find any of their own, who were in the mansion, although they dug through the wreckage for two days ... This was the first information about the consequences of the explosion. installed in the house number 17 radio mines. From Dzerzhinsky Street I got to the city committee, agreed on everything there and went to the headquarters of the Steppe Front: in the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) I was instructed to find among the prisoners one of the enemy sappers who took part in mining the city. The front department of SMERSH had many interesting documents captured during the flight of the Nazis from Kharkov. Here I secured a promise to help in the search for sappers among the prisoners. Three or four days have passed. Settled in two houses, the task force worked, inspecting buildings intended for Ukrainian government agencies and other facilities. Min we did not find. At first it was alarming, and then it even ceased to surprise: the enemy clearly made no effort to respond to the blow received from Soviet miners in the forty-first year. The fascist "superhumans" were not up to mining, they only thought about how to save the skin! On the third or fourth day, a comrade sent from the city committee of the party sought out: they called from the headquarters of the front, asked to come, they had a surprise for me! Meeting with a German "colleague" "Surprise" turned out to be the German captain Karl Heyden, who served in sapper units, arrived in Kharkov with the 68th Infantry Division of Major General Georg von Braun and was directly involved in clearing mines at house No. 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street. A lanky, lean man was brought into the room where I was waiting for the prisoner, in a crumpled tunic without shoulder straps and sleeve patches, in trampled boots with wide tops. A tired face, reddish, graying hair, reddish stubble on sunken cheeks. I invited the prisoner to sit down. He sank down on the indicated stool, glanced at me, and lowered his eyes to his clasped hands. He did not know, of course, with whom he was to talk, and perhaps he was already indifferent to whom. I looked at the enemy officer who, two years ago, by the will of fate, became my rival in the art of mine blasting, and from whom two years ago in

not only my reputation but also my future depended to a very large extent. The view, to be sure, is dull. But two years ago, Karl Heiden certainly did not lower his eyes to the Russians! Two years ago, people like him entered Kharkov with ferts, the devil himself was not his brother! The fifty-four-year-old Major General von Braun, who was appointed head of the garrison of the "second capital of Ukraine," also arrived in Kharkov as a winner. He must have been happy. Still would! At first, fortune did not smile at him for a long time: he did not make a career during the First World War, until the year 1934, until the age of forty-seven, he pulled the service strap in the rank of major, and only with the coming to power of the Nazis something dawned ahead: first they made him a lieutenant colonel, and in 1939, for participation in the intervention in Spain, colonel. And now, on November 1, the Fuhrer awarded him the rank of lieutenant general, made him the master of the Soviet city! Co-lossal! The war is about to end in complete victory, he, Georg von Braun, will remain alive and well and will finally be able to enjoy the fruits of triumph! It must be assumed that he will stay in Kharkov for a long time: there is enough to do in Russia! It must be clarified that Georg von Braun, not distinguished by military talents, possessed a talent that was especially highly valued by the Hitlerite clique: the talent of an executioner. None of the fascist German generals who served in the 6th Field Army carried out the order of the army commander von Reitenau of October 10 as zealously as Brown. And Reitenau's order said: "The fight against the enemy in the rear of the front is not yet being carried out seriously enough. Treacherous and cruel partisans and degenerate women still continue to be taken prisoner. With fanatics and vagrants, dressed in semi-military uniforms or completely in civilian clothes, they are messing around like with decent soldiers ... If partisans who have taken up arms are found in the rear of the army, cruel measures will be taken against them. They will also be applied in relation to that part of the male population that could prevent the proposed raids or report them in time." Fulfilling the cited order, von Braun first created a special unit in the 68th Infantry Division for "fighting partisans", and then turned the infantry regiments into punitive ones. The general marked the capture of Kharkov by hanging men and women suspected of

belonging to the Communist Party. On the afternoon of October 28, the fascist artillery lieutenant general Wernecker was blown up by a delayed-action mine in Kharkov. Mines exploded on the roads, and at railway stations, and at airfields, and in buildings. Brown went on a rampage, but the mines exploded. The executioner was afraid to enter the city, he settled in a poor little house on the outskirts, where there was no toilet, he had to run in bad weather under guard to a crevice wooden outhouse. The honor and pride of "Their Excellencies" were subjected to humiliation and ridicule, and von Braun demanded to find a good house without delay, clear mines, and set up his residence there. German sappers climbed out of their skin, looking for something suitable and safe. Alas! Wherever they poked their head, traces of the work of Soviet miners were found everywhere: both in the house where G. I. Petrovsky once lived, and in other "attractive" buildings. But there were no mines to be seen. And it was frightening: you would report that the mansion was cleared of mines, Brown would move into it, and there, the "Russian Ivans" would do some dirty trick! At first, the Nazis did not find any mines in the house number 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street. But although they knew that members of the Ukrainian government and the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (b)U lived in this house until the very last day of the defense of Kharkov, although they understood that in a short time after the departure of the government and the Politburo, it was practically impossible to install and reliably disguise a powerful mine, to master the mansion were afraid. Lucky Captain Heiden. He tracked down the traitor, who said that before leaving Kharkov, military men appeared in house number 17 and did something. Heiden ordered his subordinates to methodically examine the house, to find a possible mine. In the end, the sappers got to the basement, to the boiler room and to the pile of coal in the corner. And ... they made out a barely noticeable mysterious posting! Heiden was quite experienced and cautious. He understood that if a mine was laid in a pile of coal, then it could explode even with an insignificant shaking of the floor, and with a break in the wire, and with the slightest tension on it. In a word, one careless movement, and the end ... To begin with, the captain ordered to examine a pile of coal with a mine detector. No result. Then there was a daredevil who offered to find out where the wire stretches. Hayden accepted the offer. To help the daredevil, he singled out two

the scammer himself, who led him to the house. The captain removed all the other soldiers from the mansion and posted sentries at the gate. Fascist sappers worked slowly. Apparently, their "dared man" finally figured out how the adventure they had begun could end. In any case, on the first day the Nazis did not get to the bottom. Heiden, deciding that the soldiers were tired, ordered to postpone work until morning. In the morning, the sappers climbed into the boiler room again. And after three hours they really got to the mine! She was taken out in the evening. Huge, complex, with a lot of different duplicating and securing each other fuses and circuit breakers! The triumphant captain immediately drove to the outskirts of the city, to von Braun's little house. The head of the Kharkov garrison listened to the excited report of the sapper, thanked him with feeling for his service and ordered to prepare for the move. The next day, the fascist executioner proceeded in an armored "horch" to Dzerzhinsky Street. In addition to him, the senior staff officers of the 68th Infantry Division were housed in the mansion under reliable guard. Apparently, they all believed that they now received a dwelling that fully met their position in the Reich and military merit. On the evening of November 13, Captain Heyden again arrived with a report to von Braun. This time he reported that the electrochemical contactor of the "Russian mine", which was being monitored, had worked. Brown, of course, knew that it was mainly time bombs that exploded in the city, it certainly did not surprise him that there was a time bomb in the basement of the mansion, and he again praised Hayden. The inhabitants of Dzerzhinsky Street said that in the evenings, General Georg von Braun always walked around the garden. Then he returned to the mansion, and soon the windows on the second floor, where he slept, went out. This happened on the evening of November 13th. Only the fascist

executioner was not destined to wake up ... - We were confused by a mine in a pile of coal, - Captain Heyden admitted. - how could you guess what was under it. is

there another, much more dangerous? - Could you imagine that this second, much more

dangerous mine was controlled by radio? — No, Colonel. Even the German army did not have such mines!

- Are you still convinced that the Nazi army was in all respects equipped with the Soviet one? I chuckled. Heiden blinked, realized that he had expressed himself extremely unsuccessfully, and uttered dully: "Excuse

me, Colonel." Habit... I remembered Order No. 98/41 of November 8, 1941 on the 516th Infantry Regiment of the 68th Infantry Division of the Nazis and asked, guided by what habit, the German command lied to both its own soldiers and the population of Kharkov.

"Didn't you, captain, and your superiors know that easily removed mines were nothing more than shells of mines with ballast? Didn't they know that delayed-action mines, as a rule, remain undetected, and those that are found cannot be neutralized and must be destroyed?

"No, of course, we very soon realized

that we were not finding real mines, but wooden logs and hulls with surprises," the captain admitted reluctantly. "But the version of careless mining was considered ... how to put it better ... the most convenient ...

- How did this convenience express itself for you? I mocked. Heiden glanced sideways; "For me, Colonel?" Demotion in rank, sending to the front line and - lo! He touched his hair, which had turned gray before its time... For a long time, there was a legend about the mysterious destruction of von Braun, either by underground fighters or by partisans. Legends are not born out of nothing: partisans and underground fighters acted in the city from the first to the last day of the occupation, and acted heroically. The Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement maintained close contacts with them. But the truth is the truth. And she deserves to be a legend herself. A legend about Soviet scientists and miners who created the first radio mines in history. From the testimony of Heiden and other prisoners, from captured enemy documents, from letters and diaries of fascist soldiers and officers, a fairly clear picture of the operation of our mines in Kharkov and the Kharkov region emerged. In the city and its environs, many cars were killed and several trains hit mines. Of the 315 MZDs installed by units of the 5th and 27th railway brigades, the enemy discovered only 37, neutralized 14, and was forced to blow up 23, resigned to the inevitable in such

cases of path destruction. On the third kilometer of the Belgorod-Volchanok railroad, a delayed-action mine exploded under a train with troops. The dead and wounded were taken out by cars to the Belgorod, Mikoyanovka and Kazachya Lopan stations. At the Prokhorovka station, a two-hundred-kilogram charge with MZD exploded under a standing train. Again victims. Near the Tomarovka station, on the Gotnya-Belgorod section, another MZD exploded under a military train passing over the bridge with double traction. The bridge collapsed, forty-two carriages and both locomotives behind it. The railway section was out of order for a very long time. It would not be enough to list all the mines that exploded on railways and bridges ... The enemy could not use the Chuguev-Kharkov highway, where the MZD were installed. The Nazis had to build a grader road parallel to the highway. The hopes of the Nazis immediately after the capture of the city to use the Kharkov airfields, which had the most advanced concrete runways at that time, withered before they had time to blossom. Explosions of the MZD at aircraft stands, powerful fragmentation MZDs on the airfield and in the hangars did not allow the invaders to use the Kharkov airfields until the late spring of 1942. Learning this, I recalled with excitement and gratitude the creators of wonderful radio mines - engineers V. I. Bekauri and Mitkevich, General Nevsky, military engineer Yastrebov, military technician Leonov, young Kharkov lieutenants, commanders of railway brigades Kabanov, Pavlov and Stepanov, sergeants Lyadov and Shedov, Lebedev and Sergeev, miners Sakhnevich and Kuznetsov - all those who prepared formidable mine weapons and boldly, selflessly worked in Kharkov in the hard autumn of forty-one, turning the city into a trap for a sworn enemy. Their hard work was not in vain.

Chapter 30

Having defeated thirty selected fascist divisions on the Kursk Bulge, Soviet troops rushed to the Dnieper and Molochnaya in September: the enemy was not given the opportunity to turn the Donbass and Left-Bank Ukraine into a desert. We were looking forward to the arrival of Strokach in Kharkov: the situation could require clarifications and even changes in the operational plan for strengthening the partisan movement in Ukraine, and it would be difficult to do this without Timofey Amvrosievich. Strokach arrived on the tenth or eleventh of September. I re-read the text twice. He did not fit into consciousness. The central headquarters worked for only nine months, the occupiers are still in charge near Leningrad, in Belarus, in most of the Ukraine ... The colony took the decree from my hands with a gentle movement: - Do not rack your brains. Seen from above. Yes, but what about our troops? - As long as you carry out the tasks of the front, and then they will decide. We decided quickly. On the eleventh day, a radiogram was received from Moscow: "Your school has been completely disbanded. We suggest that you go with all the people to the disposal of the head of the Ukrainian headquarters, Comrade Strokach. duties of the representative of the USHPD, Major Perekalsky, who is in Rostov. A representative of the Ukrainian headquarters will leave for Rostov to get acquainted with the situation and your forthcoming work in this direction. Telegraph your consent. Timoshenko, Sokolov, Strokach. 11. 03. 43. No. 800. I telegraphed to Moscow about his agreement with the proposal received and two days later flew to a new duty station. I have a lot of good memories connected with my stay on the Southern Front. It was nice to make sure that the enemy did not dare to approach Rostov through the minefields, that the Nazis even cleared mines It was nice to meet my former assistant, Major V. V. Artemiev, who served in a separate special-purpose engineering brigade,

the commander of this brigade, an ardent supporter of actions on the communications of the enemy, Colonel I.P. Koryavko. The meetings with the commander of the Southern Front, General F.I. Tolbukhin, who were thoughtful and attentive, remained in my memory. From the airport we went to the headquarters. I reported on the work done by the operational group, said that the commander of the Voronezh Front, N. F. Vatutin, was waiting for a call from Timofey Amvrosievich. Strokach called the Military Council of the Voronezh Front, told about his arrival in Kharkov, listened to the commander and, after hanging up, raised his eyes to Sokolov and me:

- Tomorrow I will get acquainted with the operational situation at the front headquarters, listen to the wishes of the members of the Military Council, and finalize the plan. Time is running out. We must be in time for the fourteenth. The finalization of the plan to help the troops of the Red Army in forcing the Desna, Dnieper and Pripyat began the very next day. This plan provided for the capture and retention by the partisans until the approach of our armies of two crossings across the Dnieper north of Kiev, two crossings over the Desna, as well as ferries and crossings recently built by the enemy across these rivers and across the Pripyat. It was also planned to create bridgeheads by the partisans on the western banks of the Desna, the Dnieper and the Pripyat, and the partisans would strike from the northeast and west in the direction of Kyiv in order to facilitate the liberation of the capital of Ukraine. The main role was assigned to partisan formations and detachments located in the partisan zone between the Desna and the Dnieper. The possibilities of other formations and detachments, which also controlled numerous and rather extensive territories behind enemy lines, were taken into account. Formations and detachments numbering 17,000 people were to participate in the upcoming operations. It was assumed that already at the first stage of hostilities they would be able to allocate approximately 12,000 well-armed fighters to capture the crossings, and then, having received weapons and ammunition, within 10-15 days they would bring the number of units operating on the rivers to 25,000 people. The partisans were supposed to throw out 286 tons of weapons and ammunition, 20 guns and 100 servants to them. To do this, it was required to make 125 Si-47 sorties from September 17 to September 30. The Military Council of the Voronezh Front approved the plan proposed by the UShPD on September 15. Already on September 17, the advanced units of the Soviet

troops, with the help of partisans, crossed the Desna in several places, and the partisan formations and detachments that received the order of the UShPD moved or went to the places of hostilities indicated by them. The first radiograms with reports on the implementation of the order began to arrive on September 19. Meanwhile, T. A. Strokach, on the morning of September 23, was to depart at the head of an operational group of fifteen people to the location of the Military Council of the Voronezh Front, which had left

Kharkov and was moving behind the troops. - Stay with me. The order is signed," said Strokach. In which case, act decisively. But I don't think anything unexpected will happen. The unforeseen happens in such cases. Already on September 24, when Naumov's formation was engaged in a fierce battle near Maidanrovka with large forces of enemy infantry supported by tanks, radio messages were received from VS Ushakov, G. F. Pokrovsky and A. N. Saburov. Ushakov and Pokrovsky reported that they had reached the enemy crossings indicated by order, while Saburov reported directly to the Military Council of the Voronezh Front that he could not overcome the Ovruch-Mozyr railway and was retreating to the starting area. Naumov, having used up ammunition and not having received support from Saburov's powerful strike group, was also forced to retreat west from Kyiv. Thus, the initial great success was not developed, and we from Kharkov could not help Saburov and Naumov in any way. But that didn't end there. Help the paratroopers! In early October, while working in the headquarters office, I heard loud voices in the waiting room. The door opened. The officer on duty barely had time to say: "Commander of the airborne troops, General Zatevakhin, to you," when he appeared on the threshold, pushed the duty officer aside, resolutely entered the room and quickly walked towards me, a very tall and very pale lieutenant general. The appearance in the partisan headquarters of the commander of the airborne troops was in itself an extraordinary event, and the extremely tense, agitated look of I. I. Zatevakhin said without words: something out of the ordinary had happened. I invited the general to sit down, gave a sign to the duty officer to leave, but did not have time to ask about anything. Zatevakhin was the first to speak: "Are you replacing Strokach?" Yes, Comrade General.

- Rescue! Hope only for the partisans! Zatevakhin reported that on September 25, landings began in the right-bank regions of the Cherkasy region in order to create a strike group of Soviet troops in the rear of two enemy infantry and one tank divisions west of the so-called Bukrinsky bridgehead. Landing in a number of cases was unsuccessful, many paratroopers ended up at the location of the Nazi troops, some of the groups died, others either fought hard battles with the Nazis or dispersed. Communication with them has been lost. Are there partisans in those areas? asked

Zatevakhin. "Of course, Comrade General. - Do you keep in touch with them? - We hold.

"Is there anything we can do for our

guys?" Find and gather scattered groups, support, contact them? We will do everything in our power, Comrade General!

When I told the commander of the airborne troops that we would do everything possible to rescue the paratroopers, the first thing I thought of was the Fighter partisan detachment and its commander D. A. Korshikov. The detachment formed a representative office of the UShPD at the Military Council of the 1st Ukrainian (former Voronezh) Front just for the release to the western bank of the Dnieper. Since September 26, the detachment has been waiting for the command to take off. I asked Zatevakhin to wait a bit, went out to the waiting room and asked the duty officer where Korshikov was. Turned out to be at

headquarters. - Call him! Dmitri Aleksandrovich Korshikov, stocky, calm, self-confident, appeared about five minutes later. Having learned about the situation that had arisen, he inquired when it was necessary to fly out.

Do you know the places well? Find mine? Zatevakhin was worried.

"Don't worry, Comrade General, everything will be all right," Korshikov said firmly. The partisan detachment "Fighter" was parachuted into the desired area on the same night. And the very next day, Korshikov informed that he had discovered and withdrawn from under the enemy strike a unit of paratroopers of Senior Lieutenant Tkachev. Subsequently, Korshikov found and attached to the detachment several more units of the airborne troops, with whom he successfully

operated behind enemy lines until mid-November. To assist the airborne paratroopers, the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement immediately also connected partisan detachments operating in the Kanevsky, Mirgorod, Rzhishchevsky and Smelyansky districts of the Cherkasy region. Fulfilling the order of the UShPD, on October 9, the partisan detachment of G.K. included other paratroopers. By mid-October, partisan detachments, replenished with paratroopers, concentrated on the orders of the UShPD in the area of the Tagachan forest. Here they completely defeated the punishers sent against them, and later, in November, they were moved closer to the Dnieper, helped the troops of the Red Army to seize an important bridgehead, and facilitated their actions in the Kirovograd direction. The partisans also helped those units of the Red Army, which, after forcing the Dnieper, were cut off by the enemy from the river. The commanders of these units acted wisely: they moved to join the partisans. Subdivisions of two regiments of the 148th Rifle Chernihiv Division, the 8th Rifle Division and the artillery divisions assigned to them, with the help of the Salaya partisan formation, went to the Bovitsy-Klivy tract, contacted from there by partisan radio with the command of the 15th Rifle Corps, and then were withdrawn by partisans to Pripyat, where they joined the corps.

Chapter 31

Although Stalin and his henchmen destroyed in the thirties well-trained cadres of specialists in conducting military operations behind enemy lines, although they ignored Lenin's provisions on partisan operations, by the summer of 1943 our partisan detachments and formations represented a formidable force, inflicting tangible blows on the fascist armies. Moreover. With clever and careful planning of partisan operations, with proper provision of partisans with material resources, the command of the Red Army in the summer of 1943 could cut off enemy troops from sources of supply, put the enemy in a catastrophic situation. After all, even with huge shortcomings in the provision of explosives and mines, Ukrainian partisans alone blew up 3143 enemy trains in the second half of 1943, almost twice as many as in the past two years of the war! Alas, there was no unified plan for conducting partisan struggle, and no one was going to develop it, and very few explosives were delivered to the partisans. The partisans demanded explosives all the time! A. F. Fedorov was especially persistent. His then radiograms are a real cry from the heart. He directly radioed that he did not have the strength to watch how fascist trains go to the front with impunity, and daily demanded tola and slow-motion mines. Tola and min! The headquarters understood Fedorov well. To blow up 209 echelons in August, and only 28 in September, and just because they didn't supply explosives - it's not just every day, here every hour you start to fiddle with the higher authorities! And they dropped little explosives and mines on Kovpak, and Begma, and Grabchak, and Melnik, and Naumov ... Strokach turned to the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Ukraine, to the military councils of the Ukrainian fronts, we contacted Moscow, on his instructions, with the General Staff, with command of the Air Force, explained, asked, but the situation began to improve only towards the end of October. But as soon as they began to allocate more aircraft to us, the number of sabotage on the railways behind enemy lines increased: Fedorov already blew up 75 echelons in October, and Begma,

Andreev, Kto and Skubko - 135! However, we believed that this was not enough, insisted on increasing the number of sorties, and this took effort and time, first of all - time, which was already short. Of course, the partisans themselves did everything possible to make up for the shortage of mines and explosives: they reduced the weight of the charge in mines, used mechanical methods of crashes, and smelted explosives from unexploded enemy bombs and shells. Their ingenuity was amazing! But most of all, the partisans of AM Grabchak were the most surprised, who managed to undermine the railway bridge across the Ubort River without loss and completely unexpectedly for the enemy. Railway torpedo It happened like this. Several partisan attempts to get close to the bridge ended in failure. The bridge was guarded by four bunkers, machine gunners, three regimental mortars and a battery of anti-aircraft guns. The open terrain and the high railway embankment, on which the guards were located, allowed the Nazis to conduct circular fire. The enemy densely mined the banks of Uborta, surrounded the minefields with four rows of barbed wire, and blocked the path at the entrance to the bridge from both sides with metal gates. As they say, the mouse will not slip. And the partisans slipped through! Grabchak's intelligence found that twice a week a local fascist commandant came to the bridge on a trolley to check how his subordinates were serving. This prompted the idea to carry out an extraordinary sabotage ... The work went on for two weeks. From two wheeled trolley ramps, the partisans built a trolley platform, installed a motor on it, loaded the trolley with five unexploded aerial bombs and reinforced a long pole among the bombs, whose lower end was connected with a wire to the fuse pin in the explosive charge. Touching the upper end of the bridge span, the pole would inevitably deviate, and the taut wire would pull out the pin ... Then the "commandant" and "minder" were seated on the air bombs - trophy enemy uniforms stuffed with grass and branches. By four o'clock on October 31, the torpedo handcar was installed on the rails near the village of Tepenitsy, about a kilometer from the bridge, the engine was started and pushed. The guards of the bridge did not fire a single shot at the approaching torpedo railcar and did not close the metal gates. There was a massive explosion! Several braces and wind ties of the nearby bridge truss, the lower and upper chords of other trusses were crushed or pierced.

The stunned Nazis opened furious fire only ten minutes after the sabotage. Exclusively to clear the conscience or fear. And in order to somehow repair the bridge and with great precautions, slowly push the next train to it, it took them four whole days! The disgraced invaders made up a legend about some super-complex torpedo delivered to Uboort allegedly "from Moscow itself" and controlled by "red kamikazes" - Soviet suicide officers, who supposedly died breaking into the bridge with a "torpedo" ... In UShPD past the invention of Grabchak passed. We gathered a small conference on technology, discussed the possibility of creating more portable and reliable torpedoes for the destruction of large artificial structures. A group of enthusiasts led by Captain M. M. Tikhomirov soon developed a prototype, tested it, made improvements, and began to manufacture torpedoes at Kharkov enterprises. At the end of November, the first ten such devices were in service with the partisans; (Modern "torpedoes", equipped with a jet engine, fit in a backpack and are carried by one person. Approx. ed. A. E.) Since we are talking about technology, we must definitely say about our searches in the field of improving various types of MZD; when the temperature dropped, some fuses became capricious, gave deviations in the timing of deceleration, and in winter, in frost, they could fail altogether. to preserve and direct the most combat-ready partisan formations to the deep enemy rear. The situation itself sometimes caused partisans to conduct military operations in the zone of tactical influence of enemy troops, often together with units of the Red Army, and with the rapid advance of the Red Army, a considerable number of partisan formations turned out to be ... in our We tried to ensure that the number of partisan formations behind enemy lines did not decrease, but increased, so that battle-hardened detachments and formations with excellent experience in partisan struggle were retained for further actions.

by radio orders, the headquarters sent its representatives to many formations, who ensured that these formations, having completed the task of assisting the advancing Red Army, immediately went to the west, deep behind enemy lines, conducted reconnaissance and combat operations there, and not near the front line. The Central Committee of the CP(b)U fully supported the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement in this matter. In particular, the Central Committee sent all experienced partisans who joined the advancing troops either again to the deep enemy rear, or to the UShPD school to improve their combat skills. However, despite the measures taken by the headquarters, some detachments and formations were never able to go behind enemy lines, ended up in the liberated territory and were disbanded. Part of their personnel was sent to the army, part to party, Soviet or economic work in the liberated regions. Vershigora: "I want to make a raid in Germany!" The famous Carpathian raid of S. A. Kovpak's unit also ended in October. It was not possible to see Kovpak himself, but P.P. Vershigora arrived in Kharkov. Commanding a group of detachments, he left the raid in the most organized manner. T. A. Stroh invited me to talk to him. Four months ago, in June, I saw Pyotr Petrovich, heard Rudnev's reviews of him, and I formed a completely finished image of Vershigora - an image of a desperately brave, cunning, downright adventurous person. I expected appropriate stories from him. However, while reporting to Strokach about the raid, Pyotr Petrovich suddenly appeared before me in a completely different light. I saw a cold-blooded, prudent commander who perfectly understands the specifics of the partisan struggle. Let me remind the reader that the raid was difficult. Having reached the Carpathians, the partisans faced many times superior enemy forces. Unequal battles had to be fought, having no experience of fighting in mountainous conditions and comfortable equipment. The formation was forced to blow up and abandon heavy equipment, break away from the enemy, go to the partisan region in separate detachments and groups ... Vershigora did not dramatize what happened, but he did not hide the truth and expressed his point of view on the reasons for the failures frankly. The conclusion, at first glance, was unexpected, but absolutely correct: partisan raids should be continued without delay with them, and

to carry out raids not only on the territory of the Soviet Union, but also beyond its borders, interacting with the partisans of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. Vershigora suggested, even under appropriate conditions, to make a raid on Nazi Germany itself! Pyotr Petrovich spoke loudly, lively, gave convincing arguments, and Strokach only occasionally glanced at me, but did not object to his interlocutor. I listened to Vershigora with pleasure. The next day, Timofei Amvrosievich and Vershigora went to the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian Front; according to Strokach, Vershigora insisted on carrying out deep raids there too. It soon became known that Sidor Artemyevich Kovpak, due to age and health, was relieved of command of the unit, leaving for Soviet work. The unit he commanded is given the name of a partisan unit named after twice Hero of the Soviet Union S. A. Kovpak. P.P. Vershigora was appointed commander of the formation. He is preparing for a new raid. * * At the end of November, * the headquarters was relocated to Kyiv. They drove by car. We spent the night in the heavily devastated Konotop, half-burnt by the Nazis. Kyiv looked deserted, Khreshchatyk and Prorizna lay in ruins, not a single whole building remained on them. But the city of my commander's youth was finally liberated and began a new life>

Chapter 32 "Ovruch corridor"

The high pale December sky reluctantly drops a rare dry snow on the black radiator of the Emka, on endless fields and swamps, roadside bushes that have not stumbled in deep snow and the motionless blue of forests along the window. There are five people in the car: a representative of the intelligence department of the UShPD, Captain Ya. T. Kravchuk, the commander of the formation A. Z. Odukha, the driver Volodin, the orderly Valuykin and myself. Every now and then he throws us up on small potholes, pulls us in one direction or the other: the gravel highway to Ovruch is rather rutted, and we either overtake passing trucks and convoys, or give way to oncoming vehicles striving to slip along the axial ... Having crossed the Dnieper, the Soviet troops approached the border of the partisan region, stretching to the western borders of the state. Detachments and formations of partisans located in the northern regions of the Right-Bank Ukraine continuously interact with the Red Army. Already on November 17, the Zhitomir formation under the command of A. S. Saburov and the troops of the 13th Army liberated the city and the Ovruch railway junction, interrupting communications between the central and southern groups of Nazi troops. In the enemy front line, a gap was formed eighty kilometers wide and about two hundred kilometers long, nicknamed the "Ovruch corridor." Through it, day and night, partisan detachments, convoys with mine explosives, weapons and ammunition are moving west, and transports with the wounded, scouts and messengers are moving east. In November, the enemy tried to launch a counterattack by concentrating significant forces in the Korosten area. However, the troops of the 60th Army of Lieutenant General Chernyakhovsky, the detachments of partisans M. G. Salay, A. N. Saburov, S. F. Malikov and the detachments that diverted significant enemy forces under the general command of M. I. Nausov thwarted the enemy plan, although the Nazis managed to capture Zhytomyr for a while. Continuing the fighting, the 1st Ukrainian Front is preparing for the Zhytomyr-Berdichev operation in order to defeat the 4th tan

enemy army and reach the Lyubar-Vinnitsa-Lipovaya line. Ukrainian partisans, as always, must assist the troops of the Red Army both by direct participation in the operation and by powerful strikes against the enemy's communications in his deep rear. Late in the evening of December 14, Timofei Amvrosievich Strokach invites his deputies to the office. At a short meeting, it was decided to check the preparation of partisan formations for new raids deep behind enemy lines, and at the same time to examine the condition of the Ovruch-Slovechno-Sobychin-Snovidovich road, to make sure that it was suitable for passing our heavy tanks. Strokach looks at me: - Did you miss the partisan regions, Ilya Grigorievich? - Very

bored! - That is great. You will go with Captain Kravchuk to Ovruch, complete

these tasks of the headquarters. You need to leave immediately. Tomorrow morning on the road! By morning, Kravchuk and I are ready. I'm taking a few fuzes improved by the technical department on the road to test their action in the cold in combat conditions. Ovruch met us with a business-like crowd, continuous traffic along the snow-covered streets. The ruts turned brown with manure and grease. In the surviving "headquarters, hospitals, warehouses, from house to house - wires to boxes, telephone houses, a white flag with a cross is rinsed there, bags, barrels, tanks are piled up in a mountain and a sentry in a heavy sheepskin coat stomps near the good. Motors growl, rumble on potholes in the body of trucks, the hooves of scurrying horses clatter, the sledge runners creak ... They found Saburov's headquarters. The commander of the unit met without much friendliness. In the battles for Ovruch, his troops suffered losses, but did not get a respite, were moved north, near Yelsk, and held the defense along It made no sense to linger at Saburov, they said goodbye to him and A.Z. He seemed thinner, his face was dark from the "winter tan" - cold and wind.

"We have received instructions to prepare for the raid and are doing everything possible for this," the unit commander reported. We collect horses and oxen, we repair wagons. True, things are not going as fast as

I would like to. We are now like a rifle unit. We operate together with the 77th Rifle Corps of the 60th Army. Malikov did not let us go, left us to spend the night. At dinner he talked a lot and in detail about the recent battles, about the courage of people, and at the end he remembered himself:

- You listen, listen, and decide what good it is that we are covered with arrows! No. We sleep and see how quickly the Germans can escape to the rear, go out into the open. Partisan place there. There! And he asked to convey to Strokach a request to release the formation from the obligation to keep the defense on the southern border of the "Ovruch corridor", to give the opportunity to go into the raid as soon as possible. Upoleshchukov The next day we went to Vershigora. It was necessary to go along the partisan highway leading to Slovechno and Perga. It was the condition of this highway and the condition of the bridges across the Ubort that worried both the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement and the Military Council of the 1st Ukrainian Front. The region west of Ovruch, spread over an area of more than a thousand square kilometers, has long been under the control of partisans. The organs of Soviet power did not stop working here. Here, even schools worked throughout the war. And last spring the collective farmers carried out sowing, in the fall they harvested, and the occupiers did not get a single grain from it. Now, in the winter weather, the population went out to the partisan highway, filled up funnels, potholes, repaired bridges, arranged detours from logs in narrow places of the road so that oncoming traffic flows could pass, there were no "traffic jams". Three times Volodin stopped the car, Kravchuk and I got out and checked how the pits were being filled, the logs were being laid and fastened. It must be said that Captain Kravchuk was an architect in peacetime, construction was a familiar area for him, and during the war years he generally became adept at many issues, and began to understand the laying of roads well. We watched the work of the population meticulously, but we did not find any mistakes or shortcomings. It was felt that the case was directed by an experienced hand. We drove up to Uborti in the evening, overtaking horse teams dragging pine whips and logs to the river. On the banks of the Uborti, connected by a temporary bridge, bonfires shone with scarlet-yellow spots. Fifty or so partisans and collective farmers unanimously hammered piles under the bridge intended for heavy tanks. The picture was too unusual not to crash into memory:

I have seen more than once how partisans blow up bridges, but I have never seen how they build bridges behind enemy lines and could not imagine that I would see them. Noticing the emka stopped with a red flag on the radiator, the workers began to approach the road. We were surrounded, questions began: where are we from, what is heard about the situation on the fronts, how is life on the mainland. Not a single person went behind enemy lines without fresh Soviet newspapers and magazines, we stocked up with a whole pile of issues of Pravda and the October issues of Krokodil. Dozens of hands, dark from the cold, hardened from hard work, immediately reached for newspapers and magazines. The partisans did not advise to go at night, and our calculations did not include overworking, looking for a turn to Sobychin in the crown of the head. "The German burned down the

village, Perga, but you can spend the night with people in the forest," they told us. — Hey, Danilych! Do you hear? Come on! A middle-aged collective farmer in a shabby jacket and a sheepskin hat with a cone approached, blinking his eyelids red from the smoke:

- Conduct something? Can. He led him to a spacious dugout where the chairman of the collective farm lived and the collective farm administration was located: by the walls there were trestle beds with colorful blankets, in the corner there was a tin stove, on a wide table a large lamp made of a cut-off shell casing, clerical abacus, around the table of a shop. The chairman, after listening to Danilych's report, gave us his hand. He was short, dry, gray-haired, bearded. He hung the abacus on the wall, on a carnation, nodded to his wife, also not young, flabby, and invited her to the table. Scuffing with her felt boots, the president's wife placed a pot of cooled jacket potatoes near the lamp, salt, a jar of milk, and sliced black bread. People crowded into the dugout. They settled down on benches, trestle beds, at the doorstep. And when they cleared the table, questions began: how far is the Red Army when it is here, why did the allies calve for so long, and even now they are not in a hurry, do they want to enter paradise on someone else's hump? The resentment of the people was understandable. They themselves did not wait when it would be more convenient to start, but as soon as the fascist came, they became against it. At first, there were only a few rifles, which ones we managed to pick up. And then it went! The "Bati" detachment [We are talking about the detachment of G. M. Linkov] showed up nearby, Sidor Artemyevich Kovpak came, "Buyny" [Buyny is the partisan pseudonym of AM Grabchak] scared the Fritz. The youth, the encircled, the men, which are stronger, immediately went to the partisans, le

business, they began to let the enemy echelons derail, and the grandfathers, lads and women were more active - they organized their own, Perginsky detachment. At first, for defense, and as soon as they adopted science from the partisans, they began to go on the "piece of iron" themselves, they wrote down three fascist trains at their own expense. People talked about this without boasting, just to show that even the villagers who did not undergo army training can fight the enemy not without success, therefore, God himself ordered the British and American troops! Kravchuk and I knew better than the people of Pergin what the real contribution of the Poleshchuks to the fight against the invaders was. Back in the spring, a document fell into the hands of our scouts, testifying to the enemy's concern for the very Olevsk-Korosten railway, where the Perginites also operated. The Nazi command informed the authorities that the local partisans were well armed, completely terrorized the German administration, it was dangerous to appear already five to seven kilometers from the railway, and mine explosions continued. And it was written before summer hits! Now the occupiers did not dare to move even a mile away from the railway, they sat down at the stations, as if in fortresses, surrounding each village with earthen ramparts, dozens of firing points, strengthening the defense with artillery and passing the trains very rarely ... Collective farmers lived in dugouts. Instead of doors - mats of twigs and straw, windows - tiny holes, sealed with pieces of glass, bull bladders, bottles. The cattle stood in pole pens, insulated with spruce branches and snow; haystacks rose next to the pens. He was drawn by the smell of manure, dry grass, animals. Near some shields the chairman

has stopped:

- These are stands. Tomorrow morning we will hang the newspapers, people read them. AND ran his hand over the boards.

- Maybe soon we will listen to the radio, as before the war. If we are building a bridge for our own ... Especially the women rejoice. Everyone has either a husband or a son there. The sooner it ends, the more hope that they will return ... When we woke up, a fire was buzzing in a tin stove, smelling of warmth. After drinking tea, they said goodbye to the chairman and his wife, to a collective farmer who happened to be near the dugout, and returned to Uborti. The work went on as usual, laying the flooring. And a slender officer in a long overcoat was waiting for us - Vershi-mountain's deputy for

sabotage engineer-major Sergei Vladimirovich Kalnitsky. He was alerted by radiogram. "I decided to

meet him halfway, so as not to waste time," Kalnitsky said, "The test site was chosen between Olevsky and Belokorovich, it will be closer from here. — A sabotage group? - They are waiting in Zamyslovichi.

We remained at the bridge until the partisans hammered the last nail into the flooring and disguised the structure. Convinced that now the bridge would be impossible to detect even from a low-flying plane, I signaled to Volodin: backwater! The road from Ubort to Yurlov, where it was necessary to turn onto a country road, went through the places of summer battles. Ruined, smashed or burnt enemy trucks and cars lay on the sides of the road. On the hoods and on the sides of the Krupps, Spels and Daimler-Benzes, partisan epitaphs, not yet washed away by rain, blackened: "A partisan mine killed the son of a bitch!", "A gift from the saboteur Kovpak, breaking the sides of the Nazis!" but biting. Having reached Zamyslovichi, we got to dinner.

- We will not be late with your hospitality? I asked Kalnitsky. - Nothing, the

time is not later, and the horses are full, they will rush quickly! Combat training, sabotage. Tests of the new MZD Before leaving, I myself installed improved electromechanical fuses in delayed-action mines, warned the miners who were to work on the railway that the experiment was extremely important, caution was needed. We set out on the road on two paired horses and a koshevka. Kalnitsky was not mistaken: the horses ran together, and at about twenty-two o'clock they were taken to the edge of the old forest. There was nothing left before the railway - a kilometer and a half, the enemy himself designated it, launching lighting and signal rockets. Far to the left, a machine gun rattled dull, abruptly. Kalnitsky, I, and two scouts remained at the edge of the forest, while the partisans, divided into two groups, moved into the field. Soon their cloaks merged with snow and darkness. One group was supposed to divert the attention of the enemy, the other - to set time bombs. Twenty minutes passed. Suddenly, on the railway, right in front of us, rockets began to take off one after another, there was a barking of dogs, which was immediately drowned out.

machine gun roar. I glanced at Kalnitsky. The major engineer remained calm. And the partisans did not answer the enemy. And the rockets were already taking off both to the right and to the left, and machine guns thundered for a kilometer in both directions. Has he discovered ours? I wanted to talk to Kalnitsky, but the machine guns began to fire less frequently, the illumination dimmed, and then there was complete silence. Another ten or twelve agonizing, soul-exhausting minutes passed. And suddenly, there, from where the first flares took off and the first enemy machine guns bit into the night, there was a flash, as if a distant lightning shuddered, and after a second or two an explosion struck. It worked, as we knew, the first delayed-action grenade. And then the enemy panicked! Rocket one after another, machine guns excitedly, racing, settling down. And there are two more explosions on the road. And the rockets are catching up with each other, the machine guns are again pounding with continuous trembling, they are again trying to find and cannot find the partisans.

- So. The first group completed the task, - Kalnitsky states with satisfaction. Confirming his words, another lightning flashes over the railway and another explosion is heard, causing a new surge of rocket fury and machine-gun chatter. And the new lightning is in a different place ... Explosions of delayed-action grenades continued at different intervals for another thirty or forty minutes. The enemy responded to each explosion with dozens of rockets and showers of machine-gun lead. The distraction group returned. Her commander, a short miner, reported that the task had been completed, thirteen grenades had been thrown. We had counted only nine explosions so far, but the tenth had just struck. But here it is quiet. You don't even hear the dogs. Only occasionally will a machine-gun fire fired by the Nazis for their own reassurance break the frosty silence. The second group returned exactly one hour and twenty minutes later. She installed both MZDs, doing whatever was required. Sitting down in the bag, they heard the explosion of the eleventh grenade. There were two more left. The Nazis had to deal with them, perhaps, for a long time. In Zamyslovichi we were taken to a spacious warm dugout.

"Let's go to sleep, they'll wake me up," Kalnitsky said. We woke up in the dark, brought tea, and as soon as it dawned, we again went to the old edge. In daylight, the forest turned out to be not as dense, dense as it seemed at night, but to the railway with blotches of bunkers and

machine-gun nests and it was at hand a stone's throw. The morning breeze whistled, swaying the lonely dry stalks of weeds in the field, bringing partisan

traces. "Look," said Kalnitsky. I raised the binoculars, adjusted the eyepieces. Powerful lenses moved a high embankment covered with burning snow, a rotten patchwork of a bunker and three German soldiers washing themselves with snow.

"They don't even know what a surprise they have prepared!" Kalnitsky chuckled. It finally dawned. The day came overcast and gloomy. Well, it hasn't snowed yet with rain. The rumble of a moving train came from the direction of Olevsk. Turned the binoculars to the right. We didn't have to wait long. Eight fascist soldiers appeared with two bloodhounds and two railway platforms with ballast rolling downhill after the soldiers. In the first minute, I was even surprised: what if the platforms take overclocking, what then? But then a rope stretching behind the platform appeared in sight, and there an armored train appeared, holding the platform on the rope. That's it! First, it means that they let dogs in to sniff out tol, and if the dogs walk calmly, they let the platforms pass (they are heavier, the mine could not explode under the soldiers, and it will definitely explode under the platform!), And only in case of complete safety does it move forward an armored train... The soldiers and dogs stopped suddenly. Immediately, the platforms froze, held by an armored train. There was a bark: the bloodhound found a "mine", which, of course, was not in this place: it was replaced by several crumbs of tola, inconspicuous for the human eye. The Nazis began to fuss, began to install an explosive charge. The calculation was simple: to undermine the charge, destroying the insidious Russian mine. The charge is set, the soldiers scatter, fall into the snow. Twenty, thirty, forty seconds - explosion! Broken piece of rail. The soldiers wander to the embankment, climb it, continue their journey. Three more times the bloodhound warned of danger, and three more times the Nazis undermined the rails and made sure that there were no mines. Then the enemy sappers decided, apparently, that the section they had passed was no longer dangerous, they removed the so-called "rail bridges" from the platforms they had brought and put them on the broken sections of the road, and waved to the driver of the armored train: you can! The armored train heavily, confidently crawled over our delayed actio

Korosten, where a tense battle was going on ... The first mine not discovered by the enemy was supposed to be on a combat platoon at about fourteen hours, and the first enemy train appeared from Korosten at 11 hours and 40 minutes. Dragged platforms with wrecked tanks and guns. The train barely crawled through the rail bridges. Behind him, twenty minutes later, a train with classy wagons and wagons followed to Olevsk. Probably they were carrying the wounded. A trolley appeared behind the train with the wounded: the Nazis brought pieces of rails, removed the "rail bridges" and patched up the damaged sections of the canvas. The following trains, one after the other, briskly proceeded to Korosten from Olevsk at about 13:00. Then just as confidently, already at a good speed, three more trains followed: two from Korosten and one from Olevsk. The enemy is bold. The appointed hour drew near. That's fourteen hours. The first mine "woke up". Another enemy train that appeared from the side of Korosten, pushing two platforms with ballast in front of it, is moving at a speed of at least fifty kilometers per hour. In a hurry to get to Sarn before dark. And all the carriages in the composition are cool, officer's! Well!!! A powerful explosion scattered snow, gravel, sand, sleepers and rails. Both platforms and the locomotive, dragging the wagons behind them, crawled and collapsed down a slope. The rattle of tearing iron, the crackling of wood, the flames ... The Nazis began to jump out of the wagons that had not yet fallen to our side: from the opposite side, a forest approached close to the road, the invaders were afraid of shelling. - Everything is fine. Let's go, comrade colonel? asked

Kalnitsky.

- Let's go, comrade engineer-major! We heard indiscriminate shooting near the crash site for a long time: the invaders fought desperately with an empty roadside forest. Border outpost ... behind enemy lines After two hours, returning to Perge, we turned southwest and drove along Ubort to Sobyichin, where the headquarters of P.P. Vershigora was located. Kalnitsky did not go with us, he had business near Yurlov and Belokorovich, he had to be guided by a map. At the sixth kilometer of the road there was a soft bang, and the car veered to the left. Volodin slowed down, got out onto the road, scratched his

back of the head:

"We'll have to change the ramp, comrades!" While he was fumbling near the left front wheel, two boys of sixteen and seventeen years old came out of the forest. From under the shabby caps with earflaps - long, long-cut flaxen hair, thin padded jackets pulled together by German belts with metal buckles, with Gothic inscriptions "Gott mit uns". The guys confirmed that we were going the right way, asked if we were looking for Buiny. — How do you know him? — Are we?! And the boys vied with each other to tell how almost a year

ago, in March, someone knocked

down two fascist railway trains not far from Olevsk, and then a partisan detachment appeared in their village, and in it the commander and commissar were border guards, and among the fighters there were many border guards, and the commissar spoke, said that they had blown up two echelons and that now they would tear all the time, and they would not leave anywhere, but again it would be like a frontier post. And he also said that people should not hide from the Germans if they ask what detachment is operating here, who is the commander in it, how many people, how they are armed and where they have gone. They say that Soviet partisans will not hide behind babies and uteruses. And he also said that they should be contacted at the outpost on all issues, that everyone should be sent there, at least policemen in disguise: the partisans will figure it out ... - And did the commissar really say where the outpost would be? —

I did not believe.

- He said! in Perge. Yes, there she was. Volodin changed the ramp, we said goodbye to the guys and moved on, but their strange story did not get out of our heads. We drove slowly: Volodin was afraid of damaging another slope. The road turned into the forest. The paws of the fir trees, under the weight of the snow, sank to the crust, thin birch trees here and there bent in an arc. We passed the thicket, when, according to our calculations, there were no more than seven kilometers to Sobychin. And suddenly... - Stop the car! I ordered Volodin. The motor turned to a quiet purr, we

opened the doors. So it is: the rumor did not disappoint: from the direction of Sobychin, deaf explosions of shells and mines were heard. After driving another three kilometers, they stopped again. This time, rare artillery fire and mortars were heard quite distinctly, sharply. And then there are jerky machine-gun and automatic

queues. And now definitely in Sobyichin itself, at the location of Vershigora's headquarters. We didn't know what to think. Is it a fight?

— Equestrian! shouted Valuykin. It is true that from the grayish haze that engulfs the Sobyichinsky road, three horsemen darkened, gaining clearer contours every minute. Behind them is a sledge column. Through binoculars, I saw the red stripes on the horsemen's hats. Their! They went out on the road. The cavalry turned out to be a marching guard of the convoy with the wounded from the Rivne formation of partisans, which was headed by I.F. Fedorov and L.E. Kizya.

- What kind of shooting in Sobyichyno? Kravchuk asked the

cavalrymen. - This is what? The senior rider looked back. - So the Kovpak people are preparing for the raid, they are checking the weapons. He uttered this phrase indifferently, he was apparently not surprised that the partisans were checking heavy weapons just twelve kilometers from Olevsk, where the enemy was holding a large garrison. But just a month ago, Kovpak dealt a powerful blow to the accumulation of enemy echelons in Olevsk, destroyed all the trains stuck at the station. Saboteurs-Kovpakovtsy and after that almost every day derailed fascist trains! It would seem that the enemy should respond with punitive measures, throw large forces against the partisans, push them away from the railway, and destroy the partisan camp in Sobyichin. It wasn't there! Today, not the partisans, but the occupiers felt themselves surrounded and kept the defense around Olevsk, not thinking about anything else. What a pity that two years ago it was different.

Chapter 33

In the village of Sobyichin, at Petr Petrovich Vershigora's, we stayed until the morning of January 5 of the new year, 1944. This is where the holiday was celebrated. The Vershigora unit was the first of the partisan formations to go on a long-range raid. Then M. I. Naumov, S. A. Oleksenko, A. Z. Oduha, S. F. Malikov, N. I. Melnik, A. M. Grabchak, I. F. Fedorov, V. M. Yaremchuk, V. P. Chepiga and other famous partisan commanders. They were to take control of the railway communications of the Stanislav, Lvov, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Volyn, Rivne and Drohobych regions. For the enemy, these communications were of paramount importance: in the South-Western direction, in the group of the German fascist army "South" and "A", there were more than half of the infantry divisions that fought on the Soviet-German front. The Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement had no doubt that our detachments and formations would inflict a blow on the enemy's railways in the territory of the western regions of Ukraine that would not be inferior in strength to the blow of last summer ... Vershigora's headquarters was stationed in Sobyichin, and other units were scattered around the district. Both Vershi-gora and his assistants in the last days of December and the first days of January left the "main apartment" for a long time, checking the provision of the battalions with everything necessary for the upcoming march, their weapons, the state of military equipment, the training of fighters and commanders. In the settlements of Olevsky, Rakityansky and other areas liberated by the partisans, the Kovpak people did a great job of mobilizing the population into the Soviet Army. At the call of the Kovpakovites, crowds of conscripts with knapsacks poured into Sobyichin. The partisan conscription commission worked hard, medical examinations of conscripts were carried out, and departments, platoons, companies and battalions were formed from them. They went through drill and even fire training, they also trained with them in tactics. The prepared 5,000th reinforcement column was sent to Ovruch. All this mobilization and preparation of replenishment was carried out

literally under the noses of the invaders, shackled by the actions of partisans on enemy communications, in Sobychin, I met with Platon Voronko. The former commander of the sabotage group commanded the fifth battalion of the formation. Career growth was evident, subordinates (we saw this with the naked eye!) Respected their commander, and Voronko himself behaved confidently. Voronko believed that the new position was not a hindrance to a sabotage calling. We talked about the Carpathian raid. Voronko lost four people in it. One of the first to die was the fervent, golden-haired Lira Nikolskaya. Under mortar attack. Remembering his comrades, Plato went to the window, was silent for a long time ... The Kovpak people were escorted to the raid in the early morning of January 5th. The headquarters column - cavalrymen of the head patrol, military guards, wagons with headquarters equipment, a guard company, artillerymen and mortarmen - passed by the hut where the headquarters had been located yesterday. The red flag no longer fluttered over the porch in the winter wind. Local residents stood along the street, others walked around the columns. The partisans cheerfully called to each other with the mourners. Vershigora jumped into the saddle and galloped to catch up with his men. Vershigora managed to leave in time, and he was in a hurry not in vain. Every day brought new news about the successes of the partisans and the Red Army. The shaft of the offensive rolled on the heels of the partisan formations moving to the west. Korosten and Olevsk were liberated, the turn of cities and villages on Sluch and Goryn came. From Kyiv, from Strokach, an order came to examine the results of the actions of partisan detachments on the Korosten-Sarny railway. We started the survey: we went around the road, interviewed local residents, railway workers. Arriving on January 10 in Olevsk, I learned, I don't remember who, that Vershigora's unit three days ago tried to force Sluch on the move, surprise and destroy the enemy garrison of the city of Stolin, but failed, was forced to retreat and force Sluch

to the north. - You seemed to know the battalion commander Voronko well? - they asked me, - In the battle for Stolin, he was wounded. What hospital is he in? -

It seems they were taken to

Sobychin. What kind of hospital is there? Twenty minutes later, Volodin, Valuykin, and I were already driving to Sobychin. By the same

road, which not so long ago was firmly blocked by the Kovpak people. Platon Voronko was found in one of the Sobychinsky huts. The military assistant of the rear unit located here was doing a dressing for him. The open wound was bleeding. Voronko's lips were pale, his eyes tired, tired.

- You? Hello, he said. - Here, no luck ... In the very beginning...

- Lie still. Everything will be all right... Coming out with the paramedic into the hallway, I asked in a whisper if Voronko would survive

the transfer. - The wound is not good, even a millimeter or two, and the end, - said the military assistant. But you can carry. Who are you? Service certificate reassured the girl. I asked for a few more hours to take care of the saboteur poet, who personally blew up four echelons, three enemy tanks, five vehicles and eleven bridges.

"I need to get in touch with the railroad, Comrade Military Feldsher, to organize the immediate evacuation of Voronko to Kyiv.

"I'll do anything, Comrade Colonel!" All! She sat incessantly by Plato's bedside until my return. Voronko, with all the precautions, was transferred to a sleigh, taken to Olevsk, and from there they were taken to Kyiv by the first train. It was a shame that the Vershigora unit lost such a wonderful saboteur. Very disappointing! In Grabchak's unit Finishing the inspection of the actions of the partisans on the Korosten-Sarny road, I received news of the final liquidation of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement and a new order from Strokach: to leave for the town of Gorodnitsy, to the AM Grabchak unit, to establish the fighting qualities of the unit, to state my thoughts on the possibility of its further use.

- Stop! Pass! came a loud shout. The carriage driver stopped the horse. I threw back the heavy collar of my sheepskin coat. To the left of the sleigh is the untouched, sparkling whiteness of the winter field, to the right is the motionless, green paws weighed down by snow layers, bowed down to snowdrifts, the spruce forest. Two figures in white camouflage coats with machine guns separated from the fir trees. Peaks of winter hats were visible from under the hoods of camouflage suits. Such hats with visors,

stories, worn by Grabchak's fighters. I gave the password, after hearing the feedback, I said that I was looking for headquarters. One of the partisans sat sideways on the sled next to the cart; - Turn behind that Christmas tree, and into the forest! Behind "that Christmas tree" a road was found not a road, but a fairly flat clearing, and this clearing slowly crawled into the depths of the thicket. There were five or six people in the dugout, all in military uniform, in fur sleeveless jackets, you can't tell which one of them is Grabchak. Noticing that I was shifting my gaze from one commander to another, one of the military, of medium height, lean, with deep folds near his lips, wary, introduced himself:

Major Grabchak. With whom do I have the honor?.. I have named myself. The expression of alertness disappeared from the weather-beaten face of the formation commander: "Come in, come in, Comrade Colonel!" We've been waiting for a long time. From

Kyiv they reported that you were going. ... On January 17, 1943, two transport aircraft of the Grizodubova regiment took off from an airfield near Moscow and headed for Chervonoe Lake in the forests of Belarus. On board the aircraft were paratroopers well trained for operations behind enemy lines, mostly former border guards. The group commander, its commissar and chief of staff were also border guards. The group landed on the fires of Kovpak on the ice of Lake Chervonoye. This is the beginning of the history of the partisan formation of Andrei Mikhailovich Grabchak, popularly known under the name of Buiny: Andrei Mikhailovich signed leaflets with this pseudonym, which were scattered and pasted in the occupied cities and villages. The first addition to the group came from the Ozersk village of Lyakhovichi: the inhabitants conducted a voluntary mobilization and brought seventeen and eighteen-year-old boys to the paratroopers. At the head of the "deputation" was an ancient Lyakhovichi grandfather. - You, commander, do not look at our bast shoes! Grandpa said to Grabchak. - Look into the eyes of the guys! They, my grandchildren, will not let you down. Just give them something to beat the fascist! The "recruits" were ordered to cut footcloths from parachute silk, wrap their legs properly, and were given

vending machines:

- Pass the training - take the oath! Then a group of saboteurs joined the detachment under the command of senior sergeant Vyacheslav

Antonovich Kvitinsky. Kvitinsky was an artilleryman, at the beginning of the war he was surrounded, with the same daredevils as himself, he went into the Belarusian forests, participated in ambushes against the Nazis, joined one of the partisan detachments, and when he was defeated in battle, he led a group of surviving soldiers and acted independently. In early March, Grabchak's detachment appeared near Olevsk, derailed two fascist echelons. In retaliation, the Nazis raided the village of Yurlov, set it on fire, killed several residents, and were about to drive the rest to Germany. The peasants reported the trouble to Grabchak. The partisans ambushed, some of the punishers were killed, some were put to flight, the weapons seized from the enemy were distributed to the liberated Yurlovites, they were advised to create their own partisan detachment. The peasants did just that. The Yurlovsky detachment gradually got stronger, took part in the battles with the Nazis, committed two acts of sabotage. The echo of explosions on the railways and machine-gun fires stretched out to Grabchak partisan bursts diverged far into the forest, and people stretched ... By the time of our arrival, the formation consisted of five separate detachments posts, and a cavalry squadron holding thoroughbred horses organized like frontier recaptured from the Nazis under the saddle. Russians, and Uzbeks, and Belarusians, and Turkmens, and Kazakhs served in detachments and squadrons, in a word, it turned out to be multinational. On the account of the connection there were 106 enemy echelons derailed, an armored train, quite a few enemy vehicles with soldiers and cargo, undermined bridges, including the already mentioned bridge near Olevsk, destroyed by a torpedo. I remembered the boys I met on the road to Perge. "Tell me, right, that you advised the inhabitants of Yurlov not to hide either the size of your detachment or your escape routes?" I asked Grabchak and his commissar N. M. Podkorytov. The commander and the commissar looked at each other:

- Yes, it was like that ... - Podkorytov answered cheerfully - You see, it was important to show people that we had come here for a long time and that we would be masters. We didn't even call ourselves a detachment, but a frontier post.

"It's not by chance either," Grabchak put in. The people, according to tradition, are used to helping the border guards in everything!

- Exactly! the commissioner continued. We wanted to revive this tradition! And also - they wanted to show that they chained the enemy to communications and are not afraid of him. Let him follow. It is worse for him: he will fall into an ambush. And

yet you risked... "Not at all, Comrade Colonel! Grabchak objected briskly. - By guarding the roads and raising the locomotives, the enemy cannot throw large forces against the partisans. And it is not difficult to destroy small units. Well, we didn't sit and wait for them to catch up, we took some measures: professionals after all! - So? .. - So, they beat the German where

they did not expect it. And the enemy ran into mines, and ran into ambushes, quickly learned how to sniff out our traces. But we have claims against the headquarters, Comrade Colonel!

— In what? - You give little tola and min. You have to spend a lot of time and effort on getting explosives. More than to use! And by the way, the more mines we put and undermine the echelons, the less opportunities for the Fritz to carry out punitive operations! Then they sit day and night, like dogs, by the railways, guarding the approaches to them and pulling away the rubble from the wagons and platforms. But if you slightly reduce sabotage activity, they will become impudent, they even do combing! Nikolai Mikhailovich Podkorytov supported the commander:

- Without mines and explosives - trouble! After all, they can be widely used! And, laughing, he told how they used mine-blasting equipment to arrange various kinds of surprises: either they would mine the cash box, then they would send a "package", then, knowing the occupiers' addiction to chicken meat, they would sacrifice some kind of chicken coop ... Especially

different boldness And the ability to use the mine technique of the commander of the "Red landmine" detachment V. A. Kvitinsky. In the city of Gorodnitsa there was a German garrison, which often disturbed the partisans. It was decided to destroy this garrison without entering into battle with it. They found two peasants who agreed to sell chickens on the square opposite the school, turned into barracks. One peasant was frightened, and the second went. He with a cart stopped in front of the desired building. The soldiers saw

goods, rushed to the cart. The peasant, saying that he had an important order, took a few clubs and hastened to hide. The Germans threw on the chickens. One of them had a fuse pin tied to the leg. A 50-kilogram charge was fired, from which many soldiers suffered. It was decided to evacuate the garrison, but the partisans also managed to mine the evacuation routes. Thus, the garrison had to be taken out by aircraft. They also told about the underground work in Olevsk, where the partisan border guard Semey Andreevich Aparnev acted boldly. In addition to the formation of AM Grabchak, at that time we also visited the formations of the Kamenetz-Podolsk region, commanded by S. A. Oleksenko, A. Z. Oduha and F. S. Kot. This happened already in mid-February. These formations operated mainly in the tactical defense zone of the enemy, provided direct assistance to units of the advancing Red Army, and before that they successfully carried out operations on the Shepetovka-Tarnopol railway, which became extremely important after the Nazis were kicked out of Kiev. Destroying small bridges, widely using delayed-action mines, since September 1943, the partisans did not allow the Nazis to carry out through traffic along this road, and during the retreat they did not give the invaders the opportunity to seriously destroy it. After the retreat of the enemy in the Shepetovka-Tarnopol section, all the rails remained unexploded, a number of bridges and stations remained. The occupiers were not able to take out, they threw mountains of grain, sugar beets and other products at the stations. Beginning in the summer, the partisans inflicted enormous damage on the enemy, mainly in locomotives, wagons, platforms, military equipment, and soldiers and officers disabled during transportation. At the same time, the partisans themselves suffered almost no losses. But it was very difficult for partisan formations in open battles with the enemy. I had to witness one such battle - for Izyaslavl. On the morning of February 16, when we drove up to Izyaslavl, partisans of twelve detachments numbering about two thousand three hundred people, acting together with the rifle regiment of the Red Army, broke into the city after artillery preparation and fought in the streets. The enemy fought fiercely. I learned from the wounded where the nearest command post was. I got to the outskirts of the city, to a dilapidated hut, among the commanders I immediately recognized

Stepan Antonovich Oleksenko. He was a remarkable man, a modest, courageous commander and an experienced party leader, who headed the underground Kamenetz-Podolsky regional party committee, a regional committee that never conspired anywhere, but stood at the head of the armed partisan struggle and forced the occupiers and their minions to conspire. We didn't see each other for eight months.

Oleksenko, as it seemed to me, was haggard,

tanned. - Sit, sit, be kind! Stepan Antonovich shook hands. - Check one quill. This is not sabotage. Neither! Figured out something on the map, sent a messenger to Oduha. raised his eyes: - Like an army prachuemo! Here are the tilki without guns and tanks! About three hours later, the enemy was driven out of the city, but heavy losses were reported from the detachments, and Oleksenko became gloomy.

Moreover, the enemy delayed the further advance of the rifle regiment and partisans

- Start counterattacking! Stepan Antonovich was worried. And we have only machine guns and rifles with machine guns! He gave the order to dig in, save ammunition, and, if possible, mine the approaches to the front line of defense. The enemy actually launched several counterattacks. They were repulsed, but with new heavy losses among the partisans. Oleksenko experienced the death of people painfully. He was especially shocked by the death of fourteen-year-old Valya Kotik, a pioneer from the village of Khmelevka, Shepetovsky district, Kamenetz-Podolsk region. Valya Kotik had been carrying out the tasks of the underground and partisans since the forty-first year, while performing the tasks he was wounded twice, and Stepan Antonovich, secretly from the boy, ordered to take care of him, but Valya took part in the battle.

- It's a pity for the son of a rider! Yak son! exclaimed Oleksenko. - Such a lad, and having died, cola and the war will end! Eh! Returning to Kiev two days later, I reported to T. A. Strokach that all the inspected detachments were combat-ready, recommended not to use them in open battle, but to rearm them, supply them with sufficient quantities of explosives and delayed-action mines and send them to the deep enemy rear as soon as possible. . The recommendations were accepted. At the same time, the headquarters rejected the request of the commanders of some partisan formations to transfer them to the Red Army and transform them into rifle divisions: the war continued behind enemy lines. And the best part was that

the head of the UShPD, and who previously highly appreciated the activities of AM Grabchak, introduced him to the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The performance was supported by the Central Committee of the CP (b) U, and the title of Hero of the Soviet Union AM Grabchak was soon awarded

. Chapter 34

Shortly after our return to Kyiv, Strokach ordered the formation of groups to investigate the activities of the partisans in the liberated territory of Ukraine, primarily on the railways behind enemy lines. "Investigation in hot pursuit is necessary for the

correct choice of means and methods for further partisan struggle," said Timofei Amvrosievich.

- In our headquarters there are doubts about these means and methods, I don't think so, Comrade General!

- Not in ours. But other comrades may appear. It is necessary to defend your point of view with the facts in hand. Moreover, foreign partisans are to be assisted: the border is close! Strokach ordered me to supervise the survey. The work ahead was huge. We were able to complete it in a relatively short time only thanks to the help of the party and Soviet bodies recreated in the liberated territory. Teams of the technical department of the USHPD inspected a total of 15,800 kilometers of railway sections. They interrogated trackmen, switchmen, train drivers, stokers, residents of settlements located near highways, who were in the occupation, studied documents seized from the enemy. Of greatest interest were the magazines of the German recovery trains. These logs scrupulously recorded the time of the sabotage, the time the recovery train was called, the time it left the line and arrived at the site of the sabotage, the time the restoration work was completed and the trains began to move, data on the nature of the damage to the track and rolling stock, as well as information about the wounded and killed during the sabotage of German soldiers and officers. Eyewitness accounts and data from enemy documents show the high efficiency of partisan actions on communications. Despite strong and ever-increasing security, sabotage groups continued to derail trains and

undermined vehicles with manpower and military equipment of the enemy. Already in the winter of 1941/42, a small youth group of K.S. Zaslunov and A.E. Andreev derailed 6 enemy trains and disabled 170 steam locomotives, skillfully using coal mines created before the war. The attacks of the partisans on the communications of the invaders were growing and in the summer of 1943 they reached their climax. By actions on the communications of the invaders, the Soviet partisans inflicted damage on them ten times greater than that inflicted on our communications routes by fascist aviation, dropping over 100,000 air bombs. Having studied the reports of the survey groups, Strokach

said:

- Now there are irrefutable facts confirming the correctness of the positions of the headquarters in matters of war on enemy communications. This is very good. Very! Thousands of Soviet patriots distinguished themselves in combat operations on the communications of the occupiers. Many were awarded orders and medals, and the best were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union: A. Azonchik, V. Bondarenko, V. Kvitinsky, f. Kukharev, V. Klovov, A. Isachenko, E. Lavrinovich, G. Linkov, F. Malyshev, V. Parkhanovich, G. Tokuev, D. Rezuto, V. Pavlov, M. Petrov, V. Yaremchuk and others. The days were lengthening, warm southern winds were blowing, the foliage of the forest was shrouded in green smoke, the layers of black earth cut off by the plow turned black, the army threw off their overcoats - spring was coming. On April 8, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front crossed the border with Romania, part of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front went to the border with Romania and Czechoslovakia, and the other part of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front and the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front came close to the border with Poland. The world blew a new spring - the spring of the coming Victory.